

Summary: USBR Officials Withheld Information During Administrative Inquiry

Report Date: June 7, 2018

Report Number: 17-0977

The OIG investigated allegations that officials from the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of the Solicitor (SOL), obstructed an administrative inquiry into alleged sexual misconduct by a USBR official. The complainant alleged that USBR and SOL officials withheld information, attempted to influence witnesses by holding meetings to discuss the inquiry, and tried to stop the inquiry. The complainant further alleged that these officials provided advice to the inquiry while also advising regional management on how to address the alleged misconduct. Finally, the complainant alleged that an SOL official made disparaging comments about their work product to USBR leadership because of the complaint.

We found that two USBR officials omitted information during the administrative inquiry and that one also withheld a requested document. While we did not find evidence of improper involvement to influence or stop the inquiry, we did find that poor communication between the USBR and the SOL created confusion and mistrust regarding the roles and responsibilities of those involved with the inquiry. We confirmed that the SOL criticized some of the content in the report prepared by the complainant, which the SOL said included the complainant's opinions, but we did not find evidence that any personnel actions were taken against the complainant.

We provided this report to the USBR Commissioner and the Principal Deputy Solicitor.

