

Summary: Investigation of FWS Regional Director

Report Date: September 8, 2015

OIG investigated allegations that a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) regional director, along with FWS' Florida State supervisor for ecological services, improperly reorganized Florida's three Ecological Services field offices so that the offices would fall under the State supervisor's direction. The complainant also alleged that the regional director and the State supervisor engaged in several unfair and illegal personnel actions involving employees in the Florida field offices.

We found that the regional director knew about the reorganization, but was not directly involved in it. In addition, while the State supervisor participated in planning the reorganization, another FWS official made the final decision to implement it. We also found that the regional director was not aware of the personnel actions referenced in the complaint.

We examined 11 lateral reassignments and transfers that had occurred in the Florida field offices over several years and found that all were conducted in accordance with Federal regulations and U.S. Department of the Interior policy. We noted, however, that only two of these personnel actions involved the formal, competitive selection of personnel. The others were noncompetitive reassignments, some of which FWS did not conduct in a transparent manner. The absence of transparency may have created confusion among some FWS employees.

We issued a report to the FWS Director for information only, but because we did not find evidence of wrongdoing, we did not require a response. We also issued a management advisory to the Director, in which we recommended that FWS review its practice of noncompetitive reassignments.

This is a summary of an investigative report that was issued internally to the U.S. Department of the Interior. This summary was posted to the web on December 2, 2015.

