

Summary: Investigation of Reprisal Allegations at FWS Region 5 Contracting Office

Report Date: August 5, 2016

OIG recently concluded an investigation into allegations that a contracting officer in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Contracting Office, Region 5, was reprised against by her supervisor for contacting OIG about contracting violations in the office, being involved in a review of the office's contracting practices by the Office of Acquisition and Property Management (PAM), and informing her supervisor that an interagency agreement violated the Anti-Deficiency Act.

As reprisal, the supervisor allegedly—

- reduced the contracting officer's workload;
- issued her letters of counseling and management expectations;
- caused her to receive a lower performance rating than she deserved;
- stopped her from receiving a higher-level contracting warrant, which would authorize her to approve contracts with higher dollar values;
- canceled training that she was supposed to attend; and
- prevented her from training other employees or reviewing their work as she had done in the past.

We confirmed that the supervisor did take some of these actions against the contracting officer, but we did not find sufficient evidence that the actions were reprisal for her disclosures. The supervisor did not begin working in Region 5 until over a year after the contracting officer's OIG complaint and the PAM review, but she acknowledged that she was aware of the contracting officer's involvement. The supervisor also acknowledged being upset about the impact that the PAM review had had on her staff.

The supervisor acknowledged that she removed a portion of the contracting officer's workload, issued her the letters, stopped her from receiving the higher-level warrant, canceled her training, and did not use her to train or review the work of others, but she and other Region 5 employees provided evidence to justify these decisions. We found no evidence that the supervisor influenced the decrease in the contracting officer's performance rating.

This is a summary of an investigative report that was issued to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for any action deemed appropriate.

