

## NOAA INCENTIVE AWARDS PROGRAM HANDBOOK

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### SECTION 1. PURPOSE.

.01 This Handbook prescribes procedures and requirements for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Incentive Awards Program.

.02 This Handbook supplements information contained in the Department of Commerce (DOC) Performance Management System Handbook and in the NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-451 and is subject to revision consistent with law, rule, or regulation.

### SECTION 2. SCOPE.

NAO 202-451 applies to all incentive awards granted by NOAA with the exception of those awards unique to members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) and NOAA Corps Officers.

.01 Information on awards unique to members of the SES can be found in the DOC Executive Personnel Policy Manual:

[http://hr.commerce.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@cfoasa/@ohrm/documents/content/dev01\\_005995.pdf](http://hr.commerce.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@cfoasa/@ohrm/documents/content/dev01_005995.pdf)

and its associated Appendix:

[http://hr.commerce.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@cfoasa/@ohrm/documents/content/dev01\\_005997.pdf](http://hr.commerce.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@cfoasa/@ohrm/documents/content/dev01_005997.pdf).

.02 For awards unique to NOAA Corps Officers, please refer to the NOAA Commissioned Corps Directives, Chapter 12. Uniforms and Awards:

[http://www.noaacorps.noaa.gov/cpc/procedures/corps\\_directives/title\\_page/title\\_page.pdf](http://www.noaacorps.noaa.gov/cpc/procedures/corps_directives/title_page/title_page.pdf).

### SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS.

.01 Federal employee. A federal employee is defined by 5 USC §2105.

.02 NOAA Incentive Awards Board (NIAB). The NIAB consists of one representative from each Line Office and at least one representative for all of the Staff Offices. The NIAB reviews the Gold, Silver, and Bronze Medal, Distinguished Career Award, and Administrator's Award nominations.

.03 Performance Management and Awards Committee (PMAC). The bodies which review Line and Staff Office award nominations and related actions prior to submission to the Workforce Management Office. Each Line Office should have its own PMAC, and the Staff Offices should have one collective PMAC.

#### SECTION 4. EXTERNAL AWARDS.

External Awards are those awards programs sponsored by organizations outside of NOAA and DOC (e.g., the GEICO Public Service Awards). NOAA employees or organizations nominated for External Awards must meet the eligibility criteria established by the awards sponsor and must be submitted through the Director for Workforce Management to DOC for approval prior to submission to the sponsor.

.01 DOC must participate in the External Award program in order for NOAA to submit a nomination to the sponsor. DOC participation means that DOC has initiated its own call for nominations to NOAA and the other bureaus.

.02 External Award nominations must be approved by the nominating LO/SO prior to submission to the Workforce Management Office (WFMO).

.03 External Award nominations must be complete and meet all of the criteria established by the award sponsor prior to submission to WFMO.

.04 External Award nominations must be submitted by the deadline established by WFMO.

.05 After review by WFMO, an External Award nomination must be submitted to the Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere for approval. The nomination is then forwarded to DOC for review by the Department's Incentive Awards Board (DIAB). Only nominations approved by the DIAB will be forwarded to the awards sponsor.

.06 Further information about External Awards can be found in the DOC Performance Management System Handbook, Recognition Section, Chapter 15. External Awards.

#### SECTION 5. HONOR AWARDS.

The DOC Honor Awards are the highest form of recognition that be granted to Commerce employees. Additional information can be found in the DOC Performance Management System Handbook, Recognition Section, Chapter 10. Honor Awards. The following Honor Awards may be granted:

.01 Gold and Silver Medals. Gold and Silver Medals recognize distinguished and exceptional performance, respectively, and the program is managed by DOC. Only DOC federal employees are eligible.

- a. NOAA is eligible to submit a total of 20 Gold and Silver Medal nominations to DOC per year. This does not mean 20 Gold nominations and 20 Silver nominations, but rather means that an overall total of 20 nominations can be transmitted to DOC.
- b. Nominees may be individuals, groups, organizations, or joint organizations.
  - 1. Group nominations must not exceed 10 members.
  - 2. Organizational nominations are not required to be official organizations but can be any work unit or team.
  - 3. Joint organizational nominations must not exceed 3 components (organizations).
- c. Line and Staff Offices must submit their nominations through their respective PMACs, if applicable, prior to submission to WFMO. Line and Staff Office submissions must be approved by the Assistant Administrator or Staff Office Director.
- d. Line and Staff Offices are responsible for ensuring that their nominees will reflect favorably upon DOC if selected for final approval.
- e. All nominations must be submitted by the deadline established by WFMO.
- f. All nominations must be submitted on the Honor Awards Nomination Form found at: <http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/Word/goldsilvernomform.doc>. Incomplete nominations will be returned to the nominator.
- g. All nominations received by WFMO will be reviewed by the NIAB, which makes recommendations to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. The Under Secretary retains final approval authority.
- h. Gold and Silver Medal nominations that are submitted to DOC but not selected for a Gold or Silver Medal automatically become Bronze Medals at the NOAA level unless the nominating Line or Staff Office chooses to withdraw the nomination. This process is known as AutoBronze.
- i. Gold and Silver Medal recipients receive a framed certificate signed by the Secretary of Commerce. The certificates are presented at an annual recognition ceremony held in the Washington, D.C. area. Each individual and group recipient is granted a certificate, and each organizational recipient is granted one certificate to represent the entire organization.
- j. All travel expenses necessary for a Gold or Silver Medal recipient to attend the recognition ceremony are funded by the nominating Line or Staff Office regardless of the nominee's Line or Staff Office. Funding includes paying for the travel expenses for the award recipient and one guest.

.02 Bronze Medals. Bronze Medals recognize federal employees for superior performance and are the highest honor that can be granted by the Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere. The Bronze Medal program is managed by NOAA with oversight by DOC.

- a. Nominees may be individuals, groups, organizations, or joint organizations.
  1. Group nominations should not exceed 10 members. In rare circumstances, nominations can exceed 10 members, but a justification of at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a page must be submitted in conjunction with the nomination stating the reasons that the 10-member limitation is not sufficient in this case. Remember that the work of each group member must, assessed on its own, warrant a Bronze Medal.
  2. Organizational nominations are not required to be official organizations but can be any work unit or team.
  3. Joint organizational nominations should not exceed 3 components (organizations). In rare circumstances, nominations can exceed 3 organizational components, but a justification of at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a page must be submitted in conjunction with the nomination stating the reasons that the 3-component limitation is not sufficient in this case.
- b. Line and Staff Offices must submit their nominations through their respective PMACs, if applicable, prior to submission to WFMO. Line and Staff Office submissions must be approved by the Assistant Administrator or Staff Office Director.
- c. Line and Staff Offices are responsible for ensuring that their nominees will reflect favorably upon NOAA if selected for final approval.
- d. All nominations must be submitted by the deadline established by WFMO.
- e. All nominations must be submitted on the Bronze Medal Nomination Form found at: <http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/Word/bronzenomform.doc>. Incomplete nominations will be returned to the nominator.
- f. All nominations received by WFMO will be reviewed by the NOAA Incentive Awards Board, which makes recommendations to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. The Under Secretary retains final approval authority.
- g. Bronze Medal recipients receive an engraved plaque signed by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. Individuals and group members each receive a plaque. Organizational recipients receive one plaque per organizational component. Plaques are presented annually at a formal recognition ceremony.
- h. All travel expenses necessary for a Bronze Medal recipient to attend the recognition ceremony are funded by the nominating Line or Staff Office regardless of the nominee's Line or Staff Office. Funding includes paying for the travel expenses for the award recipient and one guest.

i. AutoBronze. Gold and Silver Medal nominations that are submitted to DOC but not selected for a Gold or Silver Medal automatically become Bronze Medals at the NOAA level unless the nominating Line or Staff Office chooses to withdraw the nomination.

.03 Distinguished Career Awards. The Distinguished Career Award is designed to recognize long-term achievement in advancing the strategic goals and mission of NOAA. Only NOAA federal employees are eligible. For further information on the Distinguished Career Awards, please refer to Appendix A at the end of this Handbook.

a. Nominees must be individuals.

b. Line and Staff Offices must submit their nominations through their respective PMACs, if applicable, prior to submission to WFMO. Line and Staff Office submissions must be approved by the Assistant Administrator or Staff Office Director.

c. Line and Staff Offices are responsible for ensuring that their nominees will reflect favorably upon NOAA if selected for final approval.

d. All nominations must be submitted by the deadline established by WFMO.

e. All nominations must be submitted on the NOAA Distinguished Career Award Nomination Form found at: <http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/Word/careersubmission.doc>. Incomplete nominations will be returned to the nominator.

f. All nominations received by WFMO will be reviewed by the NIAB, which makes recommendations to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. The Under Secretary retains final approval authority.

g. Distinguished Career Award recipients receive an engraved plaque signed by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. Plaques are presented annually at a formal recognition ceremony.

h. All travel expenses necessary for a Distinguished Career Award recipient to attend the recognition ceremony are funded by the nominating Line or Staff Office regardless of the nominee's Line or Staff Office. Funding includes paying for the travel expenses for the award recipient and one guest.

## SECTION 6. MONETARY AWARDS.

All NOAA federal employees are eligible for monetary awards with exceptions noted under each specific program. The following monetary awards are available:

.01 Administrator's Awards. Administrator's Awards, consisting of an engraved plaque and a monetary award of \$5,000, are presented annually to individuals or groups. Groups split the

\$5,000 equally. NOAA Corps Officers are eligible for the monetary portion of the award, as well as the plaque. Members of the SES are only eligible for the plaque.

a. All Administrator's Awards are funded by the nominating Line or Staff Office regardless of the nominee's Line or Staff Office. Funding includes paying for the monetary portion of the award in addition to travel for the award recipient and one guest.

b. Areas in which significant contributions to NOAA programs will be considered for Administrator's Awards include: Equal Employment Opportunity, diversity, scientific research, public service, engineering development, environmental conservation, policy development, administrative support, public affairs, and information systems.

c. In evaluating nominations submitted for the Administrator's Awards, the following factors shall be considered:

1. The importance of the nominee's personal contribution to NOAA programs and the extent or degree to which it served an urgent need;
2. The uniqueness and originality of the nominee's contribution;
3. Whether the contribution brought unusual credit to NOAA and DOC;
4. Whether the nominee's contribution resulted in an unusually important and clearly demonstrated improvement in a NOAA program;
5. If a nominee is a supervisor, whether his or her specific contribution demonstrates significant leadership skills such as the ability to lead and guide a competent staff, develop staff talents, and successfully run a productive program;
6. Exceptional leadership, skill, ingenuity, or ability displayed in administration or performance of duties which accomplished significant savings in money, time, staff resources, or equipment;
7. Creation or development of a major improvement in a service which results in a high degree of benefit to NOAA or DOC;
8. Successful implementation of new or improved policies in NOAA;
9. Exceptional skill and ingenuity in focusing on policy needs;
10. Contributions in engineering development in the areas of applied technology systems or equipment developed;
11. Important scientific research contributions; and

12. Excellence in program and/or project planning which includes developing a clear concept based on mission requirements, developing a program/project plan, including cost, schedule, and performance milestones, and the completion of predetermined milestones.

d. Line and Staff Offices must submit their nominations through their respective PMACs, if applicable, prior to submission to WFMO. Line and Staff Office submissions must be approved by the Assistant Administrator or Staff Office Director.

e. Line and Staff Offices are responsible for ensuring that their nominees will reflect favorably upon NOAA if selected for final approval.

f. All nominations must be submitted by the deadline established by WFMO.

g. All nominations must be submitted on the Administrator's Award Nomination Form found at: <http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/Word/adminnomform.doc>. Incomplete nominations will be returned to the nominator.

h. All nominations received by WFMO will be reviewed by the NIAB, which makes recommendations to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. The Under Secretary retains final approval authority.

i. Once the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere has determined the final recipients, nominators must submit a CD-326, Recommendation for Recognition, with complete accounting code information through their LO/SO awards coordinators to WFMO by the established deadline.

j. If an employee is ultimately selected to receive an Administrator's Award, a copy of the signed CD-326 must be filed by the Rating Official in the employee's Employee Performance File (EPF) and retained for 3 years.

k. Administrator's Award recipients are recognized annually at a formal recognition ceremony.

.02 Cash In Your Account (CIYA) Awards. CIYAs may be granted in \$100 increments up to \$1,000 in one transaction. An employee may not receive more than \$2,000 in CIYAs in a calendar year.

a. NOAA Corps Officers and members of the SES are not eligible for CIYAs.

b. Assistant Administrator's and Staff Office Directors are delegated the authority to approve CIYAs. This authority may be further redelegated, in writing, to any subordinate supervisor.

c. In order to avoid tax liability complications, CIYAs will not be processed during the last two pay periods of the calendar year. CIYA submissions received during these pay periods will be processed in January of the next calendar year.

d. Submission.

1. CIYAs must be submitted on the CD-326, Recommendation for Recognition.
2. The CD-326 must contain the nominee's full name (no nicknames) as printed on the employee's Earnings and Leave Statement.
3. The CD-326 must contain correct accounting information:
  - (a) 2 digit fiscal year
  - (b) 7 digit project code
  - (c) 3 digit task code
4. The CD-326 must contain a justification in the narrative section of the form.
5. The CD-326 must contain a signature and date by the nominee's Rating Official. The signature may be electronic ("/s/").
6. The CD-326 must contain a signature and date by an official who has been delegated the authority to approve CIYAs. The signature may be electronic ("/s/").
- e. When the CD-326 is complete, it must be sent as an attachment to the appropriate email address as established by WFMO. The submission email must be sent by the nominating official or by a designee with a carbon copy (CC) to the nominating official.
- f. CIYAs will be processed during the second week of the pay period within 72 hours of receipt. Submissions received during the first week of the pay period will be held for processing until the second week.
- g. A copy of the signed CD-326 must be filed by the Rating Official in the EPF and retained for 3 years.
- h. For more information on the CIYA program, please refer to the DOC Performance Management Handbook, Recognition Section, Chapter 12. Cash-in-Your-Account Award Program.

.03 Invention Awards. An invention award is cash or honorary recognition granted to a federal employee for an invention which is of interest to the U.S. Government or the public and for which protection by patenting or publication is sought.

a. Amount/Timing.

1. An Invention Award of at least \$300 is granted when an employee's invention has been favorably searched and a patent application has been filed. In the case of joint inventors, each

inventor is nominated for an equal share of the initial award except that the share to each inventor must be no less than \$100.

2. Further awards, up to \$35,000, may be granted for an invention owned by the U.S. Government whenever the invention benefits the public as evidenced by the number of patent licenses granted, reports on commercialization from patent licenses, and other information pertaining to the commercial use of the invention; or the invention is used by and benefits the government.

3. Employees are eligible to receive a cash award in any year that royalty-bearing licenses covering their inventions are in effect. (See DAO 202-452, "Incentive Awards for Federal Inventors.")

b. Process.

1. After receiving notification of a filed patent application, the Office of General Counsel informs the inventor's organization and recommends that form CD-326, Recommendation for Recognition, be prepared, and also advises the NOAA Incentive Awards Program Manager.

2. An official in the Line or Staff Office granting the award must approve the recommendation. The NOAA Incentive Awards Program Manager forwards the award proposal to the payroll office for payment if it conforms to the requirements set forth in DAO 202-452, "Incentive Awards for Federal Inventors.")

3. Invention awards to members of the SES must be approved by the Secretary of Commerce through the same channels as performance bonuses using the Performance Review Board process.

.04 Performance Awards. Performance Awards may be granted to employees covered by the Five-Level Performance Management System. Refer to the DOC Performance Management System Handbook, Recognition Section, Chapter 4. Performance Awards, for more information.

a. Submission.

1. Performance Awards must be submitted to WFMO by the established deadline.

2. The following items must be submitted to WFMO on behalf of employees nominated for performance awards:

(a) Performance Management Tracking System (PMTS) which lists all of the nominated employees, their recommended award amounts, their final ratings and scores, and the appropriation code to use when processing each award.

(b) Page 13, Performance Summary Rating, of the CD-430, Performance Management Record, for each nominated employee.

(1) Page 13 of the CD-430 must be signed in the Performance Recognition Section by the Rating Official and the Approving Official.

(2) Page 13 of the CD-430 must contain the recommended performance award amount and a current appropriation code.

b. The Rating Official must either complete Page 14, Summary Rating Narrative Documentation, of the CD-430 or the Final Element Rating and Justification page that follows each critical element in the employee's performance plan. The justification must support the recommended performance award.

c. A copy of the CD-430, Performance Management Record, which includes a justification and performance award information, if applicable, must be filed in the EPF for a minimum of 4 years.

.05 Performance Bonuses. Performance Bonuses may be granted to employees covered by the Department of Commerce Alternative Personnel System (CAPS). More information on performance bonuses is outlined in the Department of Commerce Alternative Personnel System Operating Procedures.

.06 Quality Step Increase (QSI). A QSI is an increase in an employee's rate of basic pay from one step of his or her position to the next higher step of the grade. It must be tied to the rating of record granted at the end of the performance appraisal cycle. NOAA Corps Officers, members of the SES, and employees covered by CAPS are not eligible for a QSI.

a. Eligibility. An employee must have received a rating of Level 5 in order to receive a QSI. For more information on eligibility requirements, please refer to the DOC Performance Management System Handbook, Recognition Section, Chapter 5. Quality Step Increases.

b. Submission.

1. QSI recommendations must be submitted within 90 days of the end of the performance appraisal cycle.

2. The following documents must be submitted to WFMO in order for a QSI to be processed:

(a) Performance Management Tracking System (PMTS) which lists all of the employees recommended for QSIs, and their final ratings and scores.

(b) Page 13, Performance Summary Rating, of the CD-430, Performance Management Record, for each employee recommended for a QSI.

(1) Page 13 of the CD-430 must be signed in the Performance Recognition Section by the Rating Official and the Approving Official.

(2) The Performance Recognition Section of Page 13 of the CD-430 must have the QSI box checked.

3. The Rating Official must either complete Page 14, Summary Rating Narrative Documentation, of the CD-430 or the Final Element Rating and Justification page that follows each critical element in the employee's performance plan. The justification must detail how the employee's performance was of such value to the organization that it warrants a QSI.

4. A copy of the CD-430, Performance Management Record, which includes a justification for the QSI must be filed in the EPF for a minimum of 4 years.

.07 Special Act Awards. Special Act Awards may be granted in any amount up to \$10,000. Assistant Administrators and Staff Office Directors are delegated the authority to approve Special Act Awards up to \$5,000. This authority may be further redelegated, in writing, to any subordinate supervisor. (*Note: The information contained in the Special Act Awards section does not apply to performance bonuses processed under the Commerce Alternative Personnel System*).

a. Special Act Award nominations that exceed \$5,000 but are less than \$10,000 must be approved by the NOAA Performance Review Board prior to approval by the Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere.

b. Special Act Award nominations that exceed \$10,000 must be approved by the Office of Personnel Management.

c. NOAA Corps Officers are not eligible for Special Act Awards.

d. Members of the SES are eligible for Special Act Awards in rare circumstances. Such nominations should NOT follow the submission instructions detailed below but must be submitted to the Executive Resources staff in WFMO. Special Act Awards for members of the SES must be reviewed by the Department of Commerce Incentive Awards Officer and approved by the DOC Chief Financial Officer/Assistant Secretary for Administration.

e. Employees covered by the CAPS are only eligible for Special Act Awards based on accomplishments beyond and outside of their current performance plans.

f. Employees must have a current rating of record of "Eligible" (CAPS), "Level 3" (Five-Level), "Meets or Exceeds Expectations (Two-Level), or equivalent in order to receive a Special Act Award.

g. Submission.

1. Special Act Awards must be submitted on the CD-326, Recommendation for Recognition.

2. The CD-326 must contain the nominee's full name (no nicknames) as printed on the employee's Earnings and Leave Statement.

3. The CD-326 must contain correct accounting information:
  - (a) 2 digit fiscal year
  - (b) 7 digit project code
  - (c) 3 digit task code
4. The CD-326 must have a justification attached. The justification should not be placed in the “Narrative Justification” box. Instead, “See Attached” should be placed in this box, and the narrative should be attached as a separate document.
5. The CD-326 must contain a signature and date by the nominee’s Rating Official. The signature may be electronic (“/s/”).
6. The CD-326 must contain a signature and date by an official who has been delegated the authority to approve Special Act Awards. The signature may be electronic (“/s/”).
7. When the CD-326 is complete, it must be sent as an attachment to the appropriate email address as established by WFMO. The submission email must be sent by the nominating official or by a designee with a carbon copy (CC) to the nominating official.
- h. A copy of the signed CD-326 must be filed by the Rating Official in the EPF and retained for 3 years.
- i. For more information on the Special Act Awards, please refer to the DOC Performance Management Handbook, Recognition Section, Chapter 6. Superior Accomplishment Awards.

.08 Suggestion Awards. A suggestion award is granted for an idea that contributes directly to the economy, efficiency, or effectiveness of operations. The award amount is based on the benefits realized as a result of the implementation of the idea. Refer to DAO 202-454, Suggestion Program, for more information.

a. Submission.

1. The suggestor should use an MSWord document or equivalent to explain the following:
  - (a) Name and Line or Staff Office of suggestor
  - (b) Date of suggestion
  - (c) Description of suggestion and why an improvement is needed
  - (d) Description of benefits of suggestion and its value to the government
  - (e) Pictures/photos can be included to illustrate the suggestion

2. The suggestion should be submitted the Line or Staff Office awards liaison.

.08 Technology Transfer Awards. Technology Transfer Awards, consisting of an engraved plaque and \$2,500, are presented annually to individuals or groups at a formal recognition ceremony. Groups split the \$2,500 equally.

a. All Technology Transfer Awards are funded by the nominating Line or Staff Office regardless of the nominee's Line or Staff Office. Funding includes paying for the monetary portion of the award in addition to travel for the award recipient and one guest to attend the recognition ceremony.

b. Employees in administrative positions are not eligible.

c. Please refer to Appendix B of this Handbook for more information.

## SECTION 7. NON-MONETARY AWARDS.

.01 Certificates.

a. Certificates of Appreciation are available to any person assisting DOC or NOAA in carrying out their respective organizational missions and strategic goals. Eligibility includes, but is not limited to: all NOAA and DOC employees, both federal and non-federal, members of the Senior Executive Service and other senior professionals, NOAA Corps Officers, employees of other federal agencies, contractors, consultants, and private citizens.

1. Certificates of Appreciation must be ordered, prepared, and distributed by the nominating office.

2. The issuance of Certificates of Appreciation must be approved by an appropriate supervisor in the nominating office.

b. Length of Service Certificates are granted to federal employees upon reaching ten years in service to the federal government and in five-year increments thereafter. Length of Service pins should accompany the certificate.

c. Certificates (Appreciation and Length of Service) must be ordered by completing the SF-1 Form, Printing and Binding Requisition, and submitting it to the Multimedia Division within the Commerce Office of Administrative Services. The SF-1 should be faxed to the attention of Kevin on 202-482-0179. Length of Service pins can be ordered through GSA. It is the responsibility of the Line and Staff Offices to purchase and maintain their own stocks of certificates and pins and to distribute completed certificates to their employees.

.02 On-the-Spot Awards. On-the-Spot Awards allow supervisors to recognize employees with merchandise items or gift certificates.

- a. Line and Staff Offices must establish their own On-the-Spot programs that are approved by WFMO and DOC, if applicable.
- b. Line and Staff Offices are required to maintain records on which items were granted and the employees that received such recognition.
- c. All federal employees are eligible with the exception of NOAA Corps Officers and members of the SES.
- d. Refer to Appendix C of this Handbook for an On-the-Spot Award program template.
- e. Refer to the DOC Performance Management Handbook, Recognition Section, Chapter 11. On-the-Spot Awards for more information.

.03 Time-Off Awards. A Time-Off Award grants hours of excused absence to an employee without charge to leave or loss of pay. The authority to approve Time-Off Awards is delegated to Assistant Administrators and Staff Office Directors. This authority may be redelegated, in writing, to any leave approving official. Award amounts in excess of one full duty day must be reviewed and approved by an official higher in the organization than the nominator.

a. All NOAA federal employees are eligible except:

- 1. Officers appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, or by the President alone, to positions for which rates of basic compensation may exceed the maximum rate provided in the General Schedule;
- 2. Employees who do not have a regular, established tour of duty prescribed in advance (i.e. intermittent employees);
- 3. Employees paid on a fee basis;
- 4. NOAA Corps Officers; and
- 5. Members of the SES

b. Employees must have a current rating of record of “Eligible” (CAPS), “Level 3” (Five-Level), “Meets or Exceeds Expectations (Two-Level), or equivalent in order to receive a Special Act Award.

c. The minimum Time-Off Award is a half day for full time employees, and the maximum Time-Off Award is 40 hours in one transaction for full time employees. For part-time employees or employees with uncommon tours of duty, please refer to the limitations listed in the DOC Performance Management System Handbook, Recognition Section, Chapter 13. Time Off Awards.

d. Time off granted as an incentive award must be scheduled and taken within one year of the effective date of the award. If the time is not taken within one year, it is lost and may NOT be restored.

e. Submission.

(a) Time-Off Awards must be submitted on the CD-326, Recommendation for Recognition.

(b) The CD-326 must contain the nominee's full name (no nicknames) as printed on the employee's Earnings and Leave Statement.

(c) The CD-326 must contain a justification in the narrative section of the form.

(d) The CD-326 must contain a signature and date by the nominee's Rating Official. The signature may be electronic ("/s/").

(e) The CD-326 must contain a signature and date by an official who has been delegated the authority to approve Time-Off Awards. The signature may be electronic ("/s/").

(f) When the CD-326 is complete, it must be sent as an attachment to the appropriate email address as established by WFMO. The submission email must be sent by the nominating official or by a designee with a carbon copy (CC) to the nominating official.

f. A copy of the signed CD-326 must be filed by the Rating Official in the EPF and retained for 3 years.

g. For more information on the Time-Off Award program, please refer to the DOC Performance Management Handbook, Recognition Section, Chapter 13. Time Off Awards.

.04 Unit Citations. A Unit Citation recognizes groups of employees who, because of their individual and collective efforts, have made substantive contributions to NOAA's programs. The award consists of a Unit Plaque and individual Certificates of Appreciation for each participant.

a. Consideration for a Unit Citation is given, but not limited to, those contributions which:

1. Are outstanding enough to bring unusual credit and/or favorable attention to NOAA and DOC;

2. Result in greatly advancing or furthering NOAA programs;

3. Accomplish significant savings or improvements in NOAA's operating programs; or

4. Represent outstanding service to the public.

b. Submission.

1. Unit Citation nominations may be made at any time using the CD-326, Recommendation for Recognition. The CD-326 must contain a narrative justification which details the basis for recognition.
2. Unit Citation nominations must be submitted for approval to the Assistant Administrator, Staff Office Director, or other Line or Staff Office official who has been delegated the authority for approval.
3. Once approved, the certificates and plaque will be obtained and prepared by the nominating Line or Staff Office.
4. Unit Citation plaques and certificates are signed by the Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere. The nominating Line or Staff Office is responsible for obtaining this signature and for maintaining a record of Unit Citation recipients.
5. A copy of the CD-326 documenting the Unit Citation must be filed by the Rating Official in the appropriate EPFs and retained for 3 years.

SECTION 8. ESTABLISHING NEW AWARDS.

New awards programs, known as Special Operating Unit Awards, may be established by NOAA, as well as the Line and Staff Offices. These programs must be submitted through WFMO for approval by DOC.

- .01. It is the responsibility of the NOAA Incentive Awards Program Manager and the Line or Staff Office (if applicable) to maintain an approved copy, along with the authorization document, of all Special Operating Unit Awards.
- .02 Refer to Appendix D for a sample Special Operating Unit Award program.
- .03 Proposed Special Operating Unit Award programs must contain the following sections:
  - a. Purpose
  - b. Eligibility
  - c. Frequency of Award
  - d. Types of Accomplishments
  - e. Nominating Procedures
  - f. Selection Criteria

g. Selection Procedures

h. Type of Recognition

i. Presentation

.04 All substantive changes to established Special Operating Unit Awards must be submitted to WFMO for approval prior to implementing these revisions.

## SECTION 9. RECORDKEEPING

The recordkeeping requirements for creating and maintaining EPFs are listed below:

.01 The responsibility for maintenance of EPFs at NOAA has been delegated from WFMO to rating officials.

.02 EPFs must be maintained in accordance with provisions of the Privacy Act, Freedom of Information Act, other legislative and regulatory requirements, and negotiated agreements.

.03 Performance Award, Performance Bonus, and QSI recommendations and the performance plans on which they were based must be retained for 4 years.

.04 Approved copies of Recommendations for Recognition (CD-326) must be maintained in the EPF for 3 years.

.05 Performance records that are superseded, e.g., through an administrative or judicial procedure, must be destroyed in accordance with the administrative/judicial order or settlement agreement.

.06 Records may be retained longer than the amounts prescribed above (3 or 4 years) only for the purpose of statistical analysis. The data may not be used in any action affecting the employee when the manual record has been or should have been destroyed.

.07 When an employee transfers from one operating unit into another within DOC, or to another federal agency, the following performance records must be transferred with the employee's EPF:

- a. Performance ratings of record that are 4 years old or less;
- b. The plan on which the most recent rating of record is based; and
- c. The interim rating prepared when the employee changes positions.

.08 Disclosure of performance-related information must be made available only as permitted by the Privacy Act to:

- a. The employee,

- b. The employee's representative (with a signed release statement), or
- c. Other officials of the organization who need documents in performance of their duties, or a duly credentialed official investigator (e.g. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Human Resources, Office of General Counsel).

.09 More information about the maintenance of EPFs can be found in the DOC Performance Management Handbook, Recognition Section, Chapter 14. Recordkeeping.

## SECTION 10. AUTHORITIES

This document implements the provisions of the following authorities:

- .01 5 USC Chapter 45
- .02 5 CFR Part 451
- .03 Department of Commerce Performance Management System Handbook, Recognition Section
- .04 DAO 202-452, Incentive Awards for Federal Inventors
- .05 DAO 202-454, Suggestion Program
- .06 NAO 202-451, NOAA Incentive Awards Program

## SECTION 11. REFERENCES

Further information on the awards programs mentioned in this Handbook can be found in the following references:

- .01 Commerce Alternative Personnel System Operating Procedures Manual
- .02 NOAA Commissioned Corps Directives, Chapter 12, Uniforms and Awards

Appendix A – Distinguished Career Award  
Appendix B – Technology Transfer Award  
Appendix C – On-The-Spot Award Program Template  
Appendix D – Sample Special Operating Unit Award