

Memorandum for the Record

Date: 06/09/2022

From: William H. Werkheiser, Departmental Scientific Integrity Officer

Subject: Department of the Interior Fiscal Year 2021 Scientific Integrity Annual Report

The Department of the Interior (Department) publishes this annual report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 in accordance with the 2021 Presidential Memorandum, [Restoring Trust in Government Through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking](#) (2021 Memo). The Department develops a wide range of scientific and scholarly products, and its reputation rests on the quality and integrity of these products. To this end, the Department's [Policy on the Integrity of Scientific and Scholarly Activities](#) defines key terms, assigns roles and responsibilities to scientific integrity personnel, sets forth procedures for investigating allegations of scientific integrity violations, and provides a [Code of Scientific and Scholarly Conduct](#) by which Departmental employees, scientists, and decisionmakers must abide. As part of its commitment to transparent communication, the Department will post this report on its [Scientific Integrity website](#), which also provides contact information, Policy and Code of Conduct links, frequently asked questions (FAQs), and closed case summaries.

Formal Complaints

During FY 2021, the Department received five scientific integrity complaints and one Request for Reconsideration (RfR). The Department closed 7 Complaints by the end of the FY, three that were filed in FY 2021 and four that had been filed in prior years. At the end of the FY 2021, 2 formal Complaints were open, and there were no pending Complaints or RfRs from prior years. For additional detail, the Department's Scientific Integrity Website contains [closed case summaries](#).

Table 1. FY 2021 Scientific Integrity Complaint Metrics

Criterion	Number
Complaints filed during FY 2021	5
Requests for Reconsideration (RfRs) filed during FY 2021	1
Complaints pending from prior years at the beginning of FY 2021	4
RfRs pending from prior years at the beginning of FY 2021	0
Complaints pending from prior years at the end of FY 2021	0
RfRs pending from prior years at the end of FY 2021	0
Complaints closed during FY 2021	7
RfRs closed during FY 2021	1
Complaints pending at the end of FY 2021	2
RfRs pending at the end of FY 2021	0

Program Highlights

DOI Leadership and Participation in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) Scientific Integrity Task Force

Ten scientists at the Department served on the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Scientific Integrity Fast Track Action Committee (SI-FTAC), including as one of the co-chairs, as part of the 2021 [Scientific Integrity Task Force](#) established by OSTP to review existing policies, assess alleged instances of inappropriate influence on government science, make recommendations for policy improvements, and set forth procedures for cycles of future review and improvement. The task force convened the SI-FTAC of subject matter experts throughout government to report out on scientific integrity policies and best practices. Departmental scientific integrity officials and other experts from across bureaus actively contributed over 100 years of scientific integrity and related experience.

Scientific Integrity Survey of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

In November 2020, the USGS Office of Science Quality and Integrity completed its first biennial scientific integrity employee survey to benchmark employee perception and identify areas of improvement. The survey demonstrated high levels of confidence in overall implementation of the scientific integrity policy but communicated needs for further protection from political interference in USGS science. The survey results were reported to the USGS Director and by the end of the fiscal year, were used to help inform changes to the USGS Scientific Integrity Policy.

Other Activities

- [Authorship FAQs](#): The scientific integrity program completed and posted to the scientific integrity website its [Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Authorship in Scientific and Scholarly Work Products](#) to help communicate general authorship standards for Departmental employees.
- [Scientific Integrity Officer \(SIO\) Council](#): The SIO Council is comprised of the Departmental Scientific Integrity Officer and the Bureau Scientific Integrity Officers with support from the Departmental Scientific Integrity Coordinators. The SIO Council meets twice annually to review SI Program activities, share best practices, and coordinate with stakeholders.
- Other activities during FY 2021 included: liaison with partners in the Office of Inspector General and the Office of the Solicitor on cross-cutting topics; participation in the U.S. Government Interagency Working Group on Research Misconduct and Scientific Integrity; enhancement of Scientific Integrity in-person training and upkeep of the on-line training module.