



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON
AUG 14 2019

Memorandum

To: All DOI Employees
From: Secretary 
Subject: Departmental Ethics Office

In my visits with Interior employees around the country—from the U.S. Geological Survey staff in Hawaii to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (Service) staff at the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge in Maine—I am continually impressed by the way in which you faithfully carry out your duties. Being a public servant is one of the highest callings a person can undertake, and it is clear to me that you are invested in diligently fulfilling the varied missions of the Department of the Interior (Department).

It is from these experiences—and my tenure totaling more than a decade at the Department—that I know that previous high-profile ethics issues do not fairly represent the integrity of the entire Department. Since my return in 2017, I have taken actions to improve our operations and ethical standards in an effort to rebuild public confidence in the Department's work.

The Department's ethics record has been blemished by poor decisions, an unsupported ethics program, a lack of standard operating procedures, and a lack of dedicated resources. Some Bureau and Office programs did not have in place ethics officials. This was unsustainable.

Today, I signed Secretary's Order 3375, which modifies our organizational framework to establish ethical compliance at the Department. The Order unifies 13 disparate Bureau programs into a centrally managed office. This streamlines the reporting structure for ethics personnel; consolidates the Department's ethics program into the Departmental Ethics Office; and clarifies roles and responsibilities for all Department employees. These changes will ensure that program operations are legally sufficient and compliant with ethics laws and regulations.

Mr. Scott De La Vega, Director of the Departmental Ethics Office and Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO), will oversee ethics operations for the Department. The DAEO has overall responsibility and authority for the Department's ethics program, including activities of the Bureaus and Offices. This will increase accountability and consistency across the Department.

I have worked with the DAEO's office to improve the ethics program by recruiting experienced and dedicated career ethics professionals with the leadership skills necessary to establish a best-in-class program. These employees include the DAEO; Alternate DAEO; Financial Disclosure

Supervisor; Ethics Education and Training Supervisor; and Deputy Ethics Counselors at the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and other Bureaus and Offices.

The Department has increased the number of full-time, career ethics professionals by 162 percent since 2017, nearly doubling the total hired between 2009 and 2016. This improvement and restructuring of our Department's ethics program is necessary and decades overdue. At the heart of this initiative are five interconnected priorities:

1. increasing consistency in the standards and quality of ethics advice and counseling, financial disclosure reviews, identification of conflicts of interest, and training and education provided to all Department employees;
2. reducing unnecessary structural barriers resulting in enhanced accountability and increased compliance with ethics statutes and regulations;
3. developing governmental ethics expertise among ethics personnel;
4. enhancing the independence of ethics officials and the ethics program; and
5. expanding the ethics services provided to our employees.

This historic transformation will begin on October 1, 2019, reaching completion before the end of the calendar year. All ethics contacts in your Bureaus and Offices will remain the same. Over the next few months, email addresses for those contacts will change, but your contacts and their services will not.

These changes will ensure that the Department has an effective and a responsive ethics operation to assist all employees in faithfully carrying out the duties of your offices in compliance with the law and the highest ethical standards.

I am confident that these changes will result in a best-in-class ethics program.