

Summary: Alleged Retaliation and Abusive Behavior by FWS Official

Report Date: August 6, 2018

Report Number: 17-1010

The OIG investigated allegations that a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) official intimidated and verbally abused a subordinate employee and that the official twice directed the employee to provide false information—once about an FWS event and once about an FWS investigation. The employee also alleged that the official took three retaliatory personnel actions against him after the official learned that the employee complained to the OIG about the abuse.

We found that the official knew the employee had filed a complaint against him and subsequently took two personnel actions—a written counseling and a lowered performance evaluation—against the employee within 2 months after the employee submitted the OIG complaint. The official also directed an internal investigation into the employee’s conduct within the same time period; adjudication of that investigation was still pending at the time of this report, and no personnel action had been taken against the employee as a result. The official denied that he took these actions as retaliation for the employee filing a complaint against him and stated that he lowered the employee’s performance evaluation because the employee mishandled Equal Employment Opportunity complaints within the employee’s office.

We found insufficient evidence that the official’s behavior created an abusive work environment for his staff, or that he directed the employee to provide false information.

This is a summary of an investigative report we issued to the FWS Principal Deputy Director.

