

Summary: Investigation of USGS Scientist

Report Date: August 21, 2014

OIG investigated an allegation that a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) scientist violated conflict of interest statutes. The complainant alleged that the scientist's duties included being the project officer for a cooperative sub-agreement on which her husband was named as the primary investigator.

We found that a conflict of interest did exist, and the scientist failed to seek ethics advice on this issue despite having contacted ethics counselors on numerous occasions for other matters that may have constituted a conflict of interest or the appearance thereof. We presented this investigation to the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Colorado; however, they declined criminal prosecution because USGS managers knew of the relationship but failed to report the conflict of interest to the USGS contracting officer and ethics personnel, and had not required the scientist to attend ethics training since 2009. We also found that the scientist accepted speaking honorariums and did not report the payments to the USGS Ethics Office.

We forwarded our report to USGS for action. USGS issued a written letter of reprimand to the scientist and a verbal counseling to the scientist's supervisors.

This is a summary of an investigative report that was issued internally to the U.S. Department of the Interior. This summary was posted to the web on February 2, 2016.

