

Summary: Former NPS Superintendent Violated Ethics Rules on Gifts and Use of Government Property

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The OIG investigated allegations that Philip Hooge, former Superintendent with the National Park Service (NPS) at Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve (GLBA) in Alaska, steered a \$2 million NPS Cooperative Agreement (Cooperative Agreement) to a nonprofit organization to update a documentary film about GLBA sea life. Additionally, it was alleged that Hooge provided the nonprofit organization's subcontractor with NPS lodging and fuel using GLBA funds despite those expenses being paid for under the Cooperative Agreement.

We found no evidence to support that Hooge influenced or steered the Cooperative Agreement. In August 2020, the NPS awarded the Cooperative Agreement to the nonprofit to update a film first created in the early 2000s. The nonprofit owned the copyright to the original film, which, according to the relevant justification for the Cooperative Agreement at issue, made the nonprofit uniquely qualified to update the film. Although we found that the nonprofit selected its subcontractor based on Hooge's recommendations, we also concluded that this did not violate any laws, regulations, or policies.

We found that Hooge violated ethics rules relating to the unauthorized use of Government property when he allowed the subcontractor's owner to refuel a private boat with NPS fuel during the project and allowed the subcontractor's staff to reside in NPS' GLBA staff housing. The fuel and lodging costs were paid using NPS' appropriated funds under the GLBA Superintendent's account, despite the fact that NPS had already provided funding for these expenses in the Cooperative Agreement. According to Hooge, he authorized the use of the GLBA Superintendent's account for fuel and lodging to reduce the project's overall cost. We determined, however, that Hooge never communicated these expenses or any budgetary changes to the NPS Grants Manager as required in the Cooperative Agreement. We also found no evidence that Hooge's actions resulted in any cost reductions, nor did the nonprofit return funds or lower the cost of the project.

We also determined that Hooge violated ethics rules on gifts when he and his spouse stayed overnight on the subcontractor owner's private boat during the filming project. Additionally, we confirmed that Hooge's spouse traveled aboard the subcontractor owner's private boat from Washington to Alaska in 2021, after the Cooperative Agreement was awarded and the filming project was initiated.

This is a summary of an investigative report we issued to the Comptroller of NPS, exercising the delegated authority of the Director.

