URGE Complaints and Reporting Policy for the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC)

This is what was found by the TIDE pod at NWFSC on policies for handling complaints, the reporting process, resources, and possible outcomes. Some information was public; answers that were only found through follow up with contacts are noted.

- **The link(s) to the reporting policy at our organization are here:**
  - Link - NOAA Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (For formal and informal complaints)
  - Link - Seattle Federal Executive Board
  - Are reporting policies regularly reviewed? What is the process for changing policy?
  - Are the rates of reporting made publicly available (e.g. # of reports each year)?

- **What mechanisms are available for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism?**
  - Who are the designated individuals/positions for reporting incidents?
    - Reports are made online via the NOAA Civil Rights Office (not anonymous). Complaints can be filed as Informal, which qualifies the aggrieved to EEO Counseling where litigation is avoided (through the Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program), or Formal, which is handled by the NOAA Office of Civil Rights.
  - Who do in-person and online reports go to? Who has access to see reports?
    - There is no in-person reporting option. The NOAA Office of Civil Rights (OCR) receives online reports and determines whether the complaint qualifies as formal or informal. If formal, the OCR provides a copy of the letter to the servicing Headquarters or field office attorney. The OCR assigns a contractor or staff investigator to investigate the complaint.”
  - Are police included in the process? When and how? Are individuals accompanied by an advocate or someone from the organization?
    - Police are not involved in the process. Individuals filing the complaint are not accompanied by an advocate. “Aggrieved persons...must consult a Counselor prior to filing a complaint in order to try to informally resolve the matter”, however, it is unclear how a Counselor is appointed and who is responsible for appointing a Counselor. A copy of the letter to the servicing Headquarters or field office attorney. The OCR assigns a contractor or staff investigator to investigate the complaint.
● What are the outcomes or consequences for reported individuals?
  ○ Who decides the outcomes/consequences? What is the process?
    ■ The DOC OCR assigns a contractor or staff investigator to investigate the complaint. The EEO Investigator will contact the NOAA Civil Rights Office to determine the responsible management official named in the dispute and request a list of documents regarding the complaint.
    ■ The Federal Executive Board provides an Alternative Dispute Resolution process which can apply to EEO complaints.
      ● This is non-mandatory, confidential, and free of costs. However, agreements therefrom may be binding. The Rules of Evidence do not apply. The result is a formal Settlement Agreement.
  ○ Are reports tracked?
    ■ Likely by the NOAA CRO
    ■ OPM tracks the Alternative Dispute Resolution results.
      ● OPM reports number and types of cases, percent successful, costs that were saved due to ADR.
  ○ Are repeated complaints escalated to a disciplinary board? What is the process?

● What resources are available for individuals reporting?
  ○ Counselors (Not necessarily of the same race, ethnicity, or gender) are available for those reporting informal complaints.
  ○ NWFSC formerly had an ombudsperson, but this role was lost. TIDE is going to pursue reinstating 1-2 ombudspeople who individuals can turn to in situations of harassment or more general conflict resolution needs.

● What resources are available to groups raising issues or proposing changes?
  ○ NA