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Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

URGE Complaints and Reporting Policy for Federal Employees and Contractors at the US Geological Survey (USGS) St. Petersburg Coastal and Marine Science Center and Wetland Aquatic Research Center

This is what was found by USGS-SPCMSC at USGS St. Petersburg Coastal and Marine Science Center/Wetland and Aquatic Research Center 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:**
 - Links:
 - Department of Interior (DOI) policy statement:
<https://www.doi.gov/employees/anti-harassment>
 - USGS Anti-Harassment Program
<https://www.usgs.gov/about/organization/science-support/human-capital/anti-harassment-program>
 - Cherokee Nation System Solutions (CNSS): link in the employee online portal
 - Are reporting policies regularly reviewed? What is the process for changing policy?
 - There is indication that employee knowledge of the policy and reporting procedures are reviewed in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) but we were unable to find information on how often policies are reviewed or changed.
 - Are the rates of reporting made publicly available (e.g. # of reports each year)?
 - For federal employees: The DOI EEO tracks how many cases have been filed. The specifics are not mentioned but they are classified by type (e.g., race, religion, sex, reasonable accommodation), issue (e.g., hiring, promotions). An example document that tracks discrimination complaints can be found [here](#).
 - For contractors, the rates of reporting were not made publicly available.
- **What mechanisms are available for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism?**
 - Who are the designated individuals/positions for reporting incidents?
 - The following individuals are responsible for accepting harassment incident reports from Federal Employees:
 - Supervisor or manager of the employee engaging in the alleged harassing or ANY supervisor or management official
 - Employee Relations Specialist



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- DOI Office of the Inspector General (OIG)
- [Helpline](#) (unclear if this can help file a report, but can provide advice and procedural guidance)
- [USGS Ombuds/Peer Support Workers](#) (confidential)
- [USGS CADR](#) (interpersonal conflict resolution; confidential up until the reporter decides to make a formal complaint)
- Anti-Harassment Information Line 703-648-7000
- Informal complaints about discrimination, harassment, bias, and microaggressions can be made to these organizations. These organizations have no obligation to report in a formal capacity.
 - PSWs
 - CADR
 - Ombuds
- Formal discrimination complaints can be made to:
 - DOI [Equal Employment Opportunity \(EEO\) Officer](#)
 - Office of Inspector General
 - Your supervisor
- To file a harassment and/or discrimination complaint, CNSS contractors can:
 - Report to their immediate supervisor for escalation as required
 - Contact their Human Resources representative
 - Call the EthicsPoint Hotline at 888.601.6755
 - Make an online report at [EthicsPoint.com](#)
 - Contact the Cherokee Federal Ethics and Compliance Department: complianceandethics@cherokee-federal.com or 918.986.8846
 - Call the CNB Corporate Ethics Department at: 918.739.7363
 - Write to the Ethics department at: Cherokee Nation Businesses (CNB) Ethics Department, 777 W. Cherokee St., Catoosa, OK 74015
 - Refer to Page 5 of the CNSS Code of Conduct (CoC) and CNB Connect
- Can reports be made online?
 - For Federal Employees, we could not find procedures for reporting formal complaints online. The EEO web site says that civil rights complaints must be mailed. Reports may be made anonymously, although it is unclear how employee anonymity is protected. Informally, PSWs can be contacted anonymously online.



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- For CNSS, EthicsPoint accepts online reports. The third party is used to allow anonymous reports.
- Who do in-person and online reports go to? Who has access to see reports?
 - For Federal Employees, the person who receives reports is unclear.
 - For CNSS, reports are routed to the CNSS Human Resources Officer.
- Are police included in the process? When and how? Are individuals accompanied by an advocate or someone from the organization?
 - There is no indication that police are involved, or a police report is made, in the reporting process for either Federal Employees or CNSS Contractors. However, incident reports that are “criminal and/or pose a security risk are outside the purview of the USGS Anti-Harassment Program. These allegations will be forwarded to the appropriate office for processing.” This determination is made by the reviewing officials.
 - Federal employees are permitted legal representation.
- **What are the outcomes or consequences for reported individuals?**
 - Disciplinary action may be involved, including demotion, reprimand, suspension, removal, and “other”.
 - Who decides the outcomes/consequences? What is the process?
 - For Federal Employees:
 - For Harassment complaints:
 - Supervisor/Management, ER Specialist, Employment and Labor Law Unit (ELLU) Attorney
 - A diagram of the process can be found [here](#).
 - For Discrimination complaints:
 - An informal Alternative Dispute Resolution can be filed.
 - Or, a formal complaint can be filed. The formal complaint requires an investigation with multiple interviews, an EEOC hearing that has a decision, followed by the Final Agency Decision. If one is dissatisfied with the Final Agency Decision, it can be appealed. Or, in lieu of an appeal, it can be filed in court.
 - A diagram of the process can be found [here](#).
 - For CNSS: the process appears to depend on the type of complaint and who is involved.
 - Are reports tracked? How are they tracked? By who?
 - Federal Employees:



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- The DOI EEO tracks how many cases have been filed. The specifics are not mentioned but they are classified by type (e.g., race, religion, sex, reasonable accommodation), issue (e.g., hiring, promotions). An example document that tracks discrimination complaints can be found [here](#).
- Harassment reports are tracked by the DOI Office of Human Resources. The agency is responsible for reporting them to the Bureau Human Capital Officer (HCO).
- CNSS: It is unclear if reports are tracked.
- Are repeated complaints escalated to a disciplinary board? What is the process?
 - We could not easily find information on how repeated complaints are handled for reports made by Federal Employees or CNSS Contractors.
- **What resources are available for individuals reporting?**
 - Peer Support Workers are available for confidential counsel to both federal employees and contractors. They cannot file reports for the individual; however, they can direct individuals to internal resources that might best fit their issue. An Ombudsman is available to federal employees for confidential counsel as well.
 - Counselors or advocates, especially those of the same race, ethnicity, and gender.
 - There is only one EEO Counselor for the USGS, so it may not be possible to choose an EEO counselor with the same race, ethnicity, gender, or identity; nevertheless, the individual can elect to contact a Peer Support Worker from outside her/his/their center that may have the same race, ethnicity, and gender.
 - Automatic or requested investigation of potential impact on grades or evaluations.
 - The investigation, hearing, and agency decision must all be requested by the employee.
 - Protection against retaliation or repercussions, accommodations for continuing work/courses, option for pass/fail or outside assessment.
 - Federal Employees: [No FEAR Act](#)
 - CNSS Contractors: has a non-retaliation policy within the Code of Conduct, however protections are unclear.
- **What resources are available to groups raising issues or proposing changes?**
 - There is no information on groups proposing change. Within the USGS, Peer Support Workers at many centers meet regularly and may be the best liaisons for groups to consult with prior to contacting the EEOC.

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By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read this document and agree with the information it conveys.

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Disclaimer: Any opinions or recommendations are those of the URGE pod members only and do not necessarily represent the view of the USGS or the United States Government. Deliverables and any recommendations therein will be presented to USGS leadership for consideration.