

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

FROM: Sarah Kapnick
NOAA Chief Scientist



SUBJECT: 2023 Scientific and Research Misconduct Annual Report

NOAA is publishing the following report in accordance with NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 202-735D.3: Scientific Integrity, Section 11: Communication, Oversight, Review, and Reporting Roles and Responsibilities. During calendar year 2023 (January – December 2023), NOAA received three allegations of scientific misconduct involving NOAA employees. The status of all allegations is as follows:

Allegations in Progress

In 2023, three allegations of scientific misconduct were received. All of these were still in progress at the end of the year. These allegations are summarized here.

SI 2023-002V - This claim was against a supervisor at a NOAA laboratory and an employee at a NOAA Cooperative Institute (CI). The NOAA Scientific Integrity Officer (SIO) adjudicated the claim against the NOAA employee, while the university adjudicated the claim against the CI employee. The claim alleged scientific misconduct by the supervisor for not including the complainant as an author on several publications, in spite of a letter given to him offering to include him as a co-author on publications that used data generated from a particular instrument during a specified time period. Further, the complainant alleged the same supervisor was involved in incorrect analysis, conclusions, and references cited in a paper published two years previously. The SIO established an Integrity Review Team, per the NAO's Procedural Handbook, to address the allegation. Moving it directly into an investigation allowed the SIO to recruit subject matter experts to serve on the team from outside the agency but within the federal government.

SI 2023-005Q - This claim was against a supervisor at a NOAA operational office by an employee, alleging violation of a scientist's right to speak freely about their science in regards to a post by the complainant on the social media platform X. In response to the post, the supervisor communicated a policy on future social media posts that appeared to target the complainant. The allegation was referred to inquiry and the SIO established an Inquiry Team to address the allegation.

SI 2023-009A – This claim was against scientists at two NOAA laboratories by an external, non-government scientist, alleging the use of an inappropriate data analysis technique in a published paper. The complainant further alleged coercion of a graduate student to use this technique. At the end of the year, the assessment of the allegation had not yet been concluded.

Allegations Closed

No allegations of scientific misconduct were closed in 2023. Those received in 2022 were dismissed or withdrawn; those received in 2023 were not closed by the end of the year.

Consultations

The NOAA Scientific Integrity Officer engaged in five consultations in 2023, none of which resulted in formal allegations of scientific misconduct.

Other Activities

The NOAA Scientific Integrity Committee (SIC) drafted a revision of NAO 202-735D.2 in order to bring it into alignment with the requirements under the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) *Framework for Federal Scientific Integrity Policy and Practice* (January 2023). The revised NAO was submitted to the NSTC Subcommittee on Scientific Integrity (SOSI) for review. SOSI provided comments that the SIC addressed before submitting the new NAO into the formal agency review process. The NAO review and approval were not completed before the end of 2023.