



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH
Silver Spring, MD 20910

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

FROM: Steven Thur, Ph.D.
Assistant Administrator
Performing the Duties of NOAA Chief Scientist

SUBJECT: FY2024 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 2024 (January – December 2024). NOAA received three allegations of scientific misconduct involving NOAA employees. The status of all allegations is as follows:

Allegations in Progress

In 2024, two of three allegations of scientific misconduct were found to be related and were combined.

SI 2024-008Q and SI 2024-010A - One allegation was received by the NOAA Scientific Integrity Officer (NOAA SIO) directly and one was referred to the NOAA SIO by the Office of the Inspector General, so the allegations were combined. An outside organization alleged scientific misconduct and loss of scientific integrity by NOAA concerning publicly available data that estimate the cost of weather and climate impacts. The Complainant did not identify specific NOAA employees. The NOAA SIO identified a Respondent in a NOAA Line Office (LO) and referred the allegation directly to investigation. The NOAA SIO established an Integrity Review Panel, 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. The Integrity Review Panel was led by an experienced Scientific Integrity Officer from a different NOAA LO. Evaluation of this combined allegation is on-going as of the close of this reporting period on December 31, 2024.

Allegations Closed

In 2024, one allegation of scientific misconduct that was received was closed. Three allegations received in 2023 were closed.

SI 2024-006Q - A NOAA LO employee alleged scientific misconduct by two superiors regarding decisions made about publication of a manuscript intended for the peer reviewed

literature. The NOAA SIO referred the matter to inquiry. The Inquiry Team recommended a finding of no scientific misconduct but noted that communication should be improved concerning authorship roles and responsibilities, and all aspects of the process for review and approval of publications.

SI 2023-002V - This claim was against a supervisor at a NOAA laboratory and an employee at a NOAA Cooperative Institute (CI). The NOAA 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 Panel, per the NAO's Procedural Handbook, to address the allegation. The Integrity Review Panel recommended a finding of no scientific misconduct with regard to co-authorship and misrepresented results. No disciplinary action to be taken. No correction to the scientific record is required by the Respondent.

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 a social media platform. 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 NOAA SIO established an Inquiry Team to address the allegation. The Inquiry Team made a finding of no scientific misconduct.

2023-009A - An external Complainant alleged scientists at two NOAA laboratories who were co-authors on a publication, based in part on a graduate student's (lead author) master's thesis, used an inappropriate data analysis technique in the published paper. The NOAA SIO and assessment team concluded that there was no evidence of scientific or research misconduct provided by the Complainant and this was a difference of scientific opinion.

Consultations

The NOAA SIO and Acting NOAA SIO (November 2024 - December 2024) engaged in fifteen consultations in 2024, none of which resulted in a formal allegation of scientific misconduct.

Other Activities

The revised NOAA Administrative Order for Scientific Integrity, NAO 202-735D.3, was published on March 1, 2024.