United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20240

DIRECTOR'S ORDER NO. 117

Subject: Domestic Partner Assistance Program

Sec. 1 What is the purpose of this Order? This order revises the name and coverage of the Service's Spousal Assistance Program as found in 223 FW 5, Placement Assistance Programs, Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

Sec. 2 What is our authority for taking this action? Title 5, U.S. Code, Section 2302, Merit System Principles, says that the Federal workforce should be used efficiently and effectively.

Sec. 3 To whom does this Order apply? This policy applies to all permanent Service employees.

Sec. 4 What is the Domestic Partner Assistance Program? We will provide assistance to Service employees faced with a geographic move in an effort to encourage the continued career development and retention of employees. This assistance is not provided solely for convenience of the employee and does not guarantee employment.

Sec. 5 What are the objectives for the Domestic Partner Assistance Program? The objective of the program is to provide placement assistance and information to Service employees and their domestic partners who are relocating to a different geographic area.

Sec. 6 Who is eligible to request assistance under this Program? The Domestic Partner Assistance Program is open to any domestic partner of a permanent Service employee who is relocating (see a). Additionally, if the domestic partner of a permanent Service employee is transferred by his/her employer, the Service employee may also receive assistance. In this situation, the employer need not be the Service, Department, or Federal Government (see b). For example:

a. Susie Smith is a permanent Service employee who is relocating to Region 4. Her domestic partner is eligible to request assistance from the servicing personnel office in Region 4.

b. Joe Carp, a permanent Service employee, must relocate to California with his domestic partner who is employed by IBM. Joe may request placement assistance from the servicing personnel office in Region 1.

Sec. 7 Who is considered a domestic partner? A domestic partner is:

a. A legal husband or wife;

b. A spouse by common law marriage in States where it is recognized; or

c. A person cohabiting in a stable relationship where the two individuals are financially interdependent.

Sec. 8 How do I request assistance? Placement assistance is the responsibility of the Region where the domestic partner/employee will be relocating. When you or your domestic partner receive an official offer of employment, complete Form 3-2175 (Request for Domestic Partner Placement Assistance) and forward it to the Regional servicing personnel office where the Service employee is relocating.

Sec. 9 What happens once the request is received by the servicing personnel office? The Region will make a concerted effort to provide requested assistance to the domestic partner. Managers will consider employment of domestic partners on a case-by-case basis, according to individual situations, needs, and time frames. Managers and supervisors must apply these domestic partner assistance provisions as consistently as possible within their areas of responsibility. Managers and supervisors must also be aware of the policies and regulations governing nepotism (370 DM 310, 5 CFR 310).

Sec. 10 How long can I receive assistance? Consideration under the Domestic Partner Assistance Program will terminate when the domestic partner secures employment of any type or 6 months after transferring to the new geographic location, whichever is sooner.

Sec. 11 What types of assistance can I receive? A variety of resources can be utilized to assist couples faced with geographic moves. The following are just a few examples:

a. Obtain information from local governments and Chambers of Commerce concerning local employers, types of skills required, and specific job opportunities that are available.

b. Provide the domestic partner with information regarding Federal employment application procedures and requirements. For example, an accompanying domestic partner could be counseled as to whether or not a certain occupation requires testing, and, if so, be provided the appropriate application procedures, the testing location, and related information.

c. Assemble a listing of Federal vacancies within the Department, the Service, and the appropriate commuting area.

d. Provide a listing of Internet web sites that can be used to look for employment such as USAJobs, the Department's Career Manager, employment search engines, etc.

Sec. 12 Can I use a private employment consultant or recruiting firm? The Service has no authority to use a private recruiting firm/source to aid accompanying domestic partners in finding employment. Domestic partners may utilize such services at their own discretion and expense.

Sec. 13 What is the effective date of this Order? This Order is effective immediately. It will expire on December 31, 2000, unless amended, superseded, or revoked. We will include the contents of this Order in 223 FW 5.

DIRECTOR

DATE: DEC 8 1999