

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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OVERVIEW

4.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter describes policies, procedures, and responsibilities for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) uniform program.

4.2 Why do employees wear a uniform? The uniform:

- A. Identifies employees as Service representatives; and
- B. Conveys integrity, competence, pride, and approachability.

4.3 What are the objectives of the uniform program? Our objectives are to:

- A. Project a distinct uniform image to visitors and the American public;
- B. Provide employees with functional, durable, and comfortable components that are appropriate for assigned duties and local climates and that help ensure employee health and safety;
- C. Ensure consistency in uniform appearance commensurate with the diversity of tasks and climates; and
- D. Foster employee camaraderie.

4.4 What are the authorities for this chapter?

- A. Federal Employees Uniform Allowance Act, as amended (Pub. L. 83-763).
- B. Federal Salary and Fringe Benefits Act, as amended (Pub. L. 89-504).
- C. Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge Act, as amended (Pub. L. 96-291).

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D. Government Organization and Employees; Pay and Allowances and Protective Clothing and Equipment (5 U.S.C. 5901, 5902, 5903, and 7903).

E. Executive Order 11609, Delegating Certain Functions Vested in the President to Other Officers of the Government.

F. Allowances and Differentials, Office of Personnel Management Regulations (5 CFR Part 591).

RESPONSIBILITIES

4.5 Who is responsible for the Service’s uniform program? See Table 4-1.

Table 4-1: Responsibilities for the uniform program	
These employees....	Are responsible for...
A. The Director	Approving or declining to approve Servicewide policy on uniforms.
B. The Chief – National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS)	(1) Ensuring there are policy and standards in place for maintaining and administering the uniform program, and (2) With input from other programs, overseeing the uniform program.
C. Service Uniform Coordinator (in the NWRS Division of Visitor Services and Communication)	(1) Coordinating the uniform program Servicewide by serving as the liaison between the NWRS and other Service programs, (2) Serving on the Service Uniform Committee as a non-voting member (see section 4.6 for more information about the committee), (3) Coordinating with other agencies included in the uniform contract, (4) Working with the Directorate and Regional Uniform Coordinators on Servicewide uniform issues, (5) Disseminating information about uniforms to Regional Uniform Coordinators, (6) Developing a uniform budget and monitoring program costs, (7) Serving as the liaison between our uniform vendor and the Service, (8) Working with the uniform vendor to develop criteria and specifications for new items for review, (9) Monitoring the uniform contract, (10) Coordinating and attending the National Inter-Agency Uniform meeting, and (11) Coordinating and attending site visits related to the uniform program.

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Table 4-1: Responsibilities for the uniform program	
These employees....	Are responsible for...
D. Regional Uniform Coordinators (appointed by the Regional Director)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Serving as members of the Service Uniform Committee, (2) Advising the Regional Directors on uniform matters, (3) Serving as liaisons between field offices and the Service Uniform Coordinator, (4) Ensuring that employees in the Regions are fully informed about uniform policies and procurement procedures, (5) Resolving problems related to uniforms that employees encounter, (6) Participating in Regional site visits related to the uniform program, and (7) Attending the National Inter-Agency Uniform meeting.
E. Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Implementing this policy, (2) Regularly evaluating their employees for compliance and counseling or recommending remedial action for violations of uniform standards, and (3) Maintaining a copy of the "Condition of Employment" that employees who wear uniforms must sign (see Exhibit 1).
F. Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Wearing the proper uniform and conducting themselves appropriately while in uniform. Wearing the proper uniform includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Purchasing prescribed uniform items from the uniform contract vendor, (b) Wearing prescribed uniform items, (c) Wearing the uniform when required, and (d) Maintaining a clean and neat personal appearance (taking into account the nature of work assignments); and (2) Signing a "Condition of Employment Statement" when they report to duty (see Exhibit 1).

4.6 What is the Uniform Committee, and what is its role?

- A.** The Uniform Committee reviews uniform requirements and votes on changes and additions. Votes require a quorum of five members.
- B.** All programs that have employees who are required to wear uniforms are represented on the committee.
- C.** Regional Directors appoint committee members, who serve for at least 3 years. Committee members include:

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- (1) A representative from each Region, and
- (2) The Service Uniform Coordinator.

D. The committee selects a Chair annually from its members. The Chair:

- (1) Facilitates an annual meeting and serves as the liaison to the Service Uniform Coordinator, and
- (2) Serves as the acting Service Uniform Coordinator in that person's absence.

REQUIREMENTS, STANDARDS, AND LIMITATIONS

4.7 Who must wear the uniform? Supervisors may require or allow personnel to wear the uniform when it will help achieve our mission.

A. Employees Who Must Wear Uniforms: Field station employees at National Wildlife Refuges, Fish and Aquatic Conservation program employees at fish and wildlife conservation offices and National Fish Hatcheries, Federal Wildlife Officers (FWO) in the NWRs, and Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) Wildlife Inspectors at wildlife inspection stations (see 452 FW 1) must wear the uniform while on duty at their field stations.

- (1) Employees required to wear the uniform receive a uniform allowance.
- (2) To ensure that employees required to wear the uniform understand that wearing it correctly, adhering to specified personal appearance standards, and conducting oneself properly while in uniform, are conditions of employment, we must:
 - (a) Put a notice in vacancy announcements for uniformed positions that the positions require wearing the uniform in accordance with applicable policies;
 - (b) Put the requirement in position descriptions; and
 - (c) When offering a new employee a position, verbally notify him/her about the uniform requirements and give him/her the "Condition of Employment Statement" in Exhibit 1. The employee must sign and date the statement and give it to his/her supervisor when reporting to duty.

B. Employees Who Are Authorized to Wear Uniforms (depending on circumstances): Directorate members and Project Leaders or supervisors may allow employees other than those in section 4.7A to wear the uniform if it helps us attain our uniform program objectives. Examples of programs whose employees may wear uniforms include, but are not limited to, Ecological Services, Migratory Birds, the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), and members of the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team.

- (1) The Project Leader/supervisor or Directorate member determines what times and under what conditions wearing the uniform is appropriate.
- (2) Employees who are allowed to wear the uniform on an intermittent or case-by-case basis must purchase uniform components with station funds using the same procurement procedures they use for special purpose components.

C. Volunteers and Uniforms: Volunteers may not buy or wear the standard, field, law enforcement, or

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special purpose Service uniform components or dress in a way that makes them look like Service employees. The public must be able to easily recognize volunteers and distinguish them from employees (see 150 FW 3). The Service provides volunteers their own identifying Service volunteer uniform.

(1) Volunteer uniform components are available through our uniform vendor. The components are in the current year's uniform catalogue and on the uniform ordering Web site.

(2) Components must be paid for using station funds.

(3) Volunteers must not wear uniform components off duty.

D. Contractors and Uniforms: Contractors may not buy or wear the standard, field, or law enforcement Service uniform components. Contractors may, at the discretion of the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) responsible for their contract, wear the Service special purpose items while performing duties on behalf of the Service (see section 4.8(D)).

4.8 What are the different categories of uniforms? There are four categories of uniforms—standard, field, law enforcement, and special purpose.

A. Standard. The components for the standard uniform are in the current year's uniform catalogue and on the uniform ordering Web site. Employees purchase the standard uniform using their uniform allowance. Employees may continue to wear items that are discontinued or are no longer in the catalogue as long as they meet the Service's wear and appearance standards (see section 4.9).

B. Field. The components for the field uniform are also in the current year's uniform catalogue and on the uniform ordering Web site. Employees purchase the field uniform using their uniform allowance. Field stations may buy field t-shirts using station funds, but they are for field use only. Employees must not wear them in public view (also see section 4.9B(1)).

C. Law Enforcement. The components for the general law enforcement uniform are in the current year's uniform catalogue and on the uniform ordering Web site. Employees purchase the law enforcement uniform using their uniform allowance.

(1) Wildlife Inspectors should review 452 FW 1, Wildlife Inspector Uniform Requirements, for details.

(2) In addition to the standard law enforcement uniform, NWRS FWOs must have a dress uniform, and some may have an Honor Guard uniform:

(a) *Law Enforcement Dress.* Every NWRS FWO must have a complete dress uniform. Law enforcement dress components are available through the uniform catalogue and on the uniform ordering Web site.

(b) *National Honor Guard.* The Service's National Honor Guard consists of uniformed law enforcement employees from each Region and Headquarters. These FWOs represent the Service at funerals, memorial services, dedications, award ceremonies, etc. National Honor Guard uniform components are not available through the uniform catalogue because we use a separate vendor. See 470 FW 4, Honor Guard, and the [Honor Guard Operational Handbook](#) for details.

D. Special Purpose. Special purpose components include such items as the polo shirt, long sleeve twill shirt, field t-shirt, and fire t-shirt.

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(1) Employees who are required to wear the uniform (see section 4.7(A)) and receive a uniform allowance:

- (a)** May wear special purpose items at agency or interagency meetings, professional society meetings, conferences, and other similar venues when wearing the full uniform is inappropriate.
- (b)** With their supervisor's permission, may wear special purpose items off station while performing duties at official outreach events. Off-site outreach events include, but are not limited to, fairs, festivals, and school presentations.
- (c)** May not wear special purpose items while off duty.

(2) Employees who are allowed to wear the uniform (see section 4.7(B)), but do not receive a uniform allowance:

- (a)** In the field:
 - i. With their supervisor's permission, may wear special purpose items. However, we prefer that employees who work in the field wear a standard or field uniform purchased using station funds. Special purpose items must also be purchased using station funds.
 - ii. May not wear special purpose items while off duty.
- (b)** In the Headquarters, Regional, or NCTC offices:
 - i. With their supervisor's permission, may wear special purpose items, which must be purchased using station funds.
 - ii. May not wear special purpose items while off duty.

(3) Service CORs, working with Project Leaders or other supervisors, may authorize contractors to wear the special purpose polo or long-sleeve shirt, which must be purchased using station funds. Contractors may not wear them while off duty.

(4) Special purpose items are only available through our uniform vendor and are in the current year's uniform catalogue.

4.9 What are the Service's standards for wear and appearance?

A. Wear. Personnel must ensure that when reporting for work they are wearing the appropriate uniform for scheduled duties, and that uniform components are neat and clean.

B. Appearance. Personal appearance should be as neat and presentable as conditions and job duties permit. Clothing should not be wrinkled, baggy, or excessively tight; must not be faded; and must be free of worn areas, holes, or other indicators of excessive wear. Shirts should be tucked in (see the section on "Style" in Table 4-2 for exceptions).

(1) Field t-shirt: Personnel should only wear field t-shirts out of public view. The field t-shirt may be worn as an undergarment, similar to wearing a plain white t-shirt. When worn as an undergarment, only the collar should be visible with no more than the top button of the Service uniform shirt open.

(2) Alterations to uniforms: Personnel may alter the Service uniform so that it fits appropriately. They may not alter the length of the uniform pants, skirt, or shirt for fashion reasons (e.g., shortening the pants to capri length, shortening the skirt to mini length, or shortening the shirt to the midriff).

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4.10 What are the requirements for wearing the ornament components of uniforms? Service personnel:

A. May wear Service-issued, length-of-service and distinguished, meritorious, and superior service award items with their uniforms. They may also wear the American flag pin, but only if it's purchased using station funds through the official uniform vendor (available through the uniform catalogue and on the uniform ordering Web site). If worn, the American flag pin must be centered above the nameplate.

B. May not wear badges or insignia (other than Service-issued badges and insignia), ribbons, decorations, pin-on jewelry, or similar items on the uniform. Wildlife Inspectors may wear rank insignia pins (see 452 FW 1).

C. Must not reproduce the Service's official emblem or insignia without the Director's approval (see 041 FW 2 for more information).

D. May only wear approved nameplates/cloth nametags with the uniform. Cloth nametags are sewn on appropriate garments for employees. The cloth nametags are available on the poplin and work shirts and can be sewn on to outerwear. Wildlife Inspectors may only wear metal nameplates (see 452 FW 1). If not sewn on, uniformed employees receive two nameplates bought with station funds.

(1) Wear nameplates centered 6mm (¼") above the right pocket flap on standard uniform shirts. You don't have to wear a nameplate with the polo shirt, but if you do, place the nameplate on the opposite side of the logo at a point ¼" above where the logo is.

(2) Law enforcement badges are issued to law enforcement officers (both OLE Wildlife Inspectors and NWRS FWOs) through their Regional law enforcement supervisors. The badges represent authority to enforce certain laws.

(a) Officers must always wear law enforcement badges with the standard, law enforcement dress and Honor Guard uniform unless it would be a safety hazard.

(b) Law enforcement badges are Government property. Officers must return them to the issuing office when leaving the Service, or if they lose law enforcement authority.

4.11 What are the exceptions to the uniform requirements? Employees who must wear the uniform while on duty (see section 4.7(A)) must wear it in compliance with this chapter. Exceptions to the standards are in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2: Exceptions to uniform requirements	
Exception	Description
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of weather, roughness of duty, where the uniform is inappropriate for a specific audience or venue, safety, and other practical considerations, the Project Leader/supervisor may make an exception to wearing the uniform. • Approved safety and foul weather gear, and other equipment as deemed necessary, may be substituted or added to the full uniform. • When engaged in duty where safety is a factor, such as prescribed burning, wildfire suppression, or aircraft operation, the employee is exempt from the uniform requirements. • If the uniform vendor's outerwear does not meet the safety needs of FWOs, then officers may purchase separate outerwear components using station funds and in coordination with the Division of Refuge Law Enforcement.

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Table 4-2: Exceptions to uniform requirements	
Exception	Description
Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The employee must provide a physician’s written recommendation to his/her supervisor that supports not wearing the uniform or any component, or when adding components to the uniform for medical reasons. • The Project Leader/supervisor must approve the exception and put a copy of it in the field station’s files. • Pregnancy may prevent personnel from being able to wear the uniform. Pants, skirts, or shorts purchased for maternity wear must be brown.
Footwear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the uniform vendor’s footwear does not meet an employee’s work needs, the Project Leader/supervisor may allow him/her to buy other footwear (brown, close-toed) with station funds once a year. • The station may pay up to \$150 per employee per year. • Because steel-toed safety boots are considered personal protective equipment (PPE), they do not fall under the \$150 limitation. They must be purchased using station funds.
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If wearing the uniform is inappropriate, counterproductive to uniform program objectives, or unwise, the Project Leader/supervisor may temporarily waive the uniform requirement. • Since the female long-sleeve special purpose shirt is tailored, employees may tuck it in or leave it outside the pants/skirt.

4.12 What are the requirements for wearing PPE with uniforms?

A. PPE has unique characteristics for atypical duty. Never wear a uniform component that does not meet or would interfere with required safety guidelines when involved in special duties (see 241 FW 3 for more information on PPE).

B. Examples of activities requiring PPE include:

- (1)** Oil spill investigations,
- (2)** Fire management activities,
- (3)** Flight activities,
- (4)** Boating,
- (5)** Work in extreme climate conditions, and
- (6)** Some law enforcement activities, such as:
 - (a)** Undercover activities requiring a bullet-proof vest,
 - (b)** Hunt programs requiring “hunt orange” apparel, and
 - (c)** Wildlife inspection activities.

C. Project Leaders/supervisors must purchase PPE using station funds and authorize its use (see 241 FW 3 and 241 FW 9 for more information on PPE). The equipment is the property of the Government.

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4.13. What are the prohibitions related to the Service uniform?

A. Personnel must not wear the uniform or any uniform component, including the special purpose items, while in a non-duty status. The uniform may be worn to and from work.

B. Unless otherwise listed (see Table 4-2, Exceptions), uniform items, including special purpose items, may not be purchased from vendors other than the Service's contracted uniform vendor.

C. Unless otherwise listed (see Table 4-2, Exceptions), personnel must not wear non-uniform items, other than undergarments, with the uniform. They may wear a plain white, tan, brown, or black t-shirt under the uniform shirt with no more than the top button open on the uniform shirt.

D. People not employed by the Service may not wear any part of the official Service uniform or dress in a manner that makes them look like Service employees. CORs, working with Project Leaders or other supervisors, may allow contractors to wear the polo or long-sleeve shirt (see section 4.7(D)).

DEFRAYING THE COST AND OWNERSHIP

4.14 Who receives a uniform allowance, and how much is it?

A. When we require employees to wear the uniform, the Service provides them a uniform allowance to help defray the cost. We don't intend for the allowance to completely cover the cost of all uniform needs. Insufficient funds are not an acceptable reason to wear the uniform incompletely. Employees are responsible for cleaning, upkeep, and tailoring.

B. The Service provides an initial, one-time allowance to employees when they are first placed in a uniformed position, and a replacement allowance to replace worn uniform components. Following are the requirements and limitations for initial and replacement allowances for employees who must wear a uniform:

(1) Initial uniform allowance:

(a) New full-time, uniformed employees (except for Wildlife Inspectors) = \$500.

(b) New Wildlife Inspectors = \$800. (See Wildlife Inspector Union, American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local 2103 Contract, Article 19, Section 5).

(2) Annual replacement allowance:

(a) Full-time and part-time permanent employees = up to \$400, and no less than \$150. The Project Leader/supervisor determines the appropriate allowance and uniform requirements within these parameters.

(b) Wildlife Inspectors = \$600.

(c) Full-time intermittent and temporary employees = up to \$400, and no less than \$150 (this includes the initial purchase). The Project Leader/supervisor determines the appropriate allowance and uniform requirements.

(d) Part-time intermittent and temporary employees, including summer hires = up to \$300, and no less than \$150 (this includes the initial purchase). The Project Leader/supervisor determines the appropriate allowance and uniform requirements.

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(3) Reinstated employees: If a reinstated employee has all or part of a uniform from previous employment, the Project Leader/supervisor determines the necessary initial allowance of up to \$400, and no less than \$150. Their annual allowance depends on their position (i.e., full-time, part-time, full-time intermittent, etc.).

C. Although there are structured replacement allowances to provide enough money for most employees to replace worn uniform items, some employees may not need the full amount (particularly those working indoors). Project Leaders/supervisors may:

(1) Reduce the amount of the employee's yearly replacement allowance within the maximum and minimum amounts, and

(2) Give the employee a one-time increase up to the maximum uniform allowance ceiling because of a personal emergency (e.g., loss of uniform components due to flood, fire, home destruction, etc.).

D. Service Directorate members must purchase uniform components with their duty station's funds. They do not receive an allowance.

4.15 Who owns the uniforms?

A. Uniform components bought with an allowance or station funds, except Service patches and badges, are the property of the employee. The exception is Wildlife Inspector uniforms and components, which are the property of the Government and must be returned to the Government if leaving the Service or the position (see 452 FW 1).

B. If an employee leaves the Service or his/her position changes to one where the employee doesn't need to wear a uniform, the employee must remove all patches and badges and return them to his/her supervisor for appropriate disposal or destruction.

(1) The supervisor must ensure that staff shred or cut up and throw away patches. All law enforcement badges and patches must be returned to the Regional law enforcement supervisor (for both NWRS and OLE).

(2) To help reduce costs, a uniformed employee who is changing positions or leaving the Service may transfer useable uniform components to an existing uniformed employee to help supplement his/her uniform components.

(3) A uniformed employee must never use his/her uniform allowance to purchase uniform components for another uniformed employee.

C. PPE purchased with station funds is the property of the Government and must be returned to the Service.

/sgd/ Stephen Guertin
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Date: May 15, 2015

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