

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
PERSONNEL**

**Personnel**

**Part 223 Employment**

**Chapter 15 Phased Retirement Program**

**223 FW 15**

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**OVERVIEW**

**15.1 What is the purpose of this chapter?** This chapter establishes:

**A.** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy with which eligible employees, Human Resources (HR) professionals, and managers must comply when applying for and administering the phased retirement program; and

**B.** The Service's *Phased Retirement Handbook*, which includes the procedures employees must follow when applying for phased retirement and when the agreement ends or they enter full retirement.

**15.2 What is the scope of this chapter?** This chapter applies to all Service employees eligible for immediate retirement except for:

**A.** Law Enforcement (LE) officers,

**B.** Firefighters,

**C.** Employees currently employed on a part-time basis,

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- D. Senior Executive Service (SES) employees, and
- E. Senior Leader (SL) employees.

**15.3 What is phased retirement?**

**A.** Phased retirement is a program that allows the Service to retain employees for a specific amount of time on a part-time basis while they begin to draw retirement benefits. They must work 40 hours per pay period and spend a percentage of their time mentoring (see [sections 15.11](#) and [15.12](#)).

**B.** It also allows employees to better transition into retirement, while providing the Service with more mentoring opportunities by accessing decades of institutional knowledge and experience that retirees provide. See the Service's *Phased Retirement Handbook* for more information about how the program works in practice.

**15.4 What are the authorities for this chapter and the accompanying handbook?**

- A.** Government Organization and Employees, Civil Service Retirement, Phased Retirement ([5 U.S.C. 8336a](#)).
- B.** Government Organization and Employees, Federal Employees' Retirement System, Basic Annuity ([5 U.S.C. 8412a](#)).
- C.** Move Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) ([Public Law 112-141](#)).
- D.** Office of Personnel Management (OPM), [Benefits Administration Letter 19-102](#); Additional Guidance on Phased Retirement; May 20, 2019.
- E.** OPM Civil Service Regulations, Retirement, Phased Retirement ([5 CFR Part 831, Subpart Q](#)).
- F.** OPM Civil Service Regulations, Phased Retirement ([5 CFR Part 848](#)).

**15.5 What terms do you need to know to understand this chapter?** Refer to the glossary in the Service's *Phased Retirement Handbook* if you need a definition for one of the terms we use in this chapter.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

**15.6 Who is responsible for the Service's phased retirement program?** See Table 15-1.

**Table 15-1: Responsibilities for the Phased Retirement Program**

These employees...	Are responsible for...
<b>A. The Director</b>	Approving or declining to approve Service wide policy.

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These employees...	Are responsible for...
<b>B. The Assistant Director – Management and Administration (AD-MA)</b>	<p>(1) Overseeing management of the phased retirement program, and</p> <p>(2) Ensuring full management commitment to the goals and objectives of the program.</p>
<b>C. Directorate members (e.g., Regional Directors, Assistant Directors)</b>	Approving or denying requests to participate in phased retirement for employees in their programs and Regions.
<b>D. Supervisors</b>	<p>(1) When considering employees' requests to participate in phased retirement, ensuring that:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(a) The duties are appropriate for part-time work, and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(b) There is enough staffing to support a part-time schedule;</p> <p>(2) Working with employees when they complete the FWS Phased Retirement Agreement, <a href="#">FWS Form 3-2293</a>;</p> <p>(3) Identifying appropriate mentoring activities for employees who participate in phased retirement to perform;</p> <p>(4) Setting appropriate work schedules for phased retirees at 40 hours a pay period; and</p> <p>(5) Tracking the number of hours the phased retiree spends mentoring, which must be 20 percent of their hours (8 hours a pay period).</p>
<b>E. HR Operations, Benefits and Compensation Branch</b>	<p>(1) Providing retirement counseling and annuity estimates as requested,</p> <p>(2) Reviewing and certifying Phased Retirement Status Elections forms (see the <i>Phased Retirement Handbook</i> for required forms and procedures), and</p> <p>(3) Processing personnel actions and sending required documents to OPM for new phased retirements and for those that are terminating.</p>
<b>F. Employees</b>	<p>If interested in phased retirement and when participating:</p> <p>(1) Justifying, in writing, how they can transfer knowledge and skills to others within the organization;</p>

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These employees...	Are responsible for...
	<p><b>(2)</b> Engaging in discussions with their supervisors regarding mentoring activities, work schedules, and work assignments; and</p> <p><b>(3)</b> Completing the appropriate documents and forms required (see the <i>Phased Retirement Handbook</i> for required forms).</p>

**CRITERIA AND APPROVALS**

**15.7 What criteria must employees meet for them to be considered for phased retirement?**

Employees must meet all the criteria in Table 15-2 to be considered for the program.

**Table 15-2: Checklist of Criteria for Consideration in Phased Retirement Program**

Check below	CRITERIA
	The employee must be eligible for immediate retirement.
	The employee must have been employed by the Service full-time for at least 3 years before entering phased retirement.
	Duties must be appropriate for part-time work.
	There must be enough staffing to support the part-time schedule. Supervisors cannot backfill the position on a full-time basis because the phased retiree continues to encumber the current position until fully retired.
	The employee must be willing and able to mentor.
	The employee must apply for the phased retirement program.

**15.8 What forms and documents are required to apply for phased retirement?** Refer to the Service's *Phased Retirement Handbook* for the procedures and a list of forms to complete to apply for the program.

**15.9 What are the time limits for participating in phased retirement?**

- A.** The initial phased retirement period must be set at 6 months.
- B.** Including the initial 6-month period, the maximum duration of a participant's phased retirement period is 2 years.
- C.** Both the phased retiree and management must agree to any extensions prior to the expiration date of the agreement. Extensions cannot exceed the overall period of 2 years.
- D.** An employee in phased retirement may voluntarily retire before the expiration date of the agreement.

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E. See the Service's *Phased Retirement Handbook* for the procedures to follow when an agreement's time limit expires.

**15.10 Who approves requests for phased retirement, how does he/she make the decision, and what agreement needs to be put in place?**

A. The supervising Directorate member approves or denies requests for phased retirement.

(1) The Directorate member makes the decision based on the criteria in [section 15.7](#).

(2) If he/she cannot approve all the requests received for phased retirement for employees in similar positions, he/she has the discretion to prioritize selection, a decision that may be subject to bargaining for employees represented by a labor organization. Prioritization decisions should be based on:

- (a) Mission-critical occupational series,
- (b) Sufficient budget allocations, and
- (c) Critical need for knowledge transfer.

B. The Directorate member or supervisor must notify applicants about whether or not their request was approved. For approved requests, the employee must get a written notice that includes the effective date of separation.

C. The employee, the supervisor, and the supervising Directorate member then must sign the Service's phased retirement agreement that describes the terms and conditions. They must use the template we provide in FWS Form 3-2293 as the agreement.

## **PHASED RETIREMENT IN PRACTICE**

**15.11 What are the mentoring requirements?**

A. A phased retiree must spend 20 percent (8 hours a pay period) of their working hours in mentoring activities.

B. The supervising Directorate member may waive mentoring requirements in an emergency, or if another unusual circumstance makes it impractical for a phased retiree to fulfill the mentoring requirements.

C. The manager/supervisor and the supervising Directorate member define what mentoring activities are appropriate depending on the employee, the position, and the program.

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**15.12 What are the pay percentages and established hours for those working under the program?**

**A.** An employee working in the phased retirement program continues to work as an employee of the Service, but under a part-time work schedule (e.g., at 20 hours per week). The employee receives an annuity benefit equal to a portion of the annuity that would have been paid had the employee fully retired. This means employees in the program will receive half of their pay and approximately half of their annuity since the only working percentage currently allowable by regulation is 50 percent.

**B.** A phased retiree who continues to work must be a part-time employee with a regularly scheduled tour of duty. They may not work on an intermittent basis.

**15.13 What does the employee need to do to return to regular full employment status?** If an employee wants to return to regular full employment, he/she submits a request using Part 2a of [SF-3116](#), Phased Employment/Phased Retirement Status Elections, through his/her supervisor to the supervising Directorate member. See the Service's *Phased Retirement Handbook* for more details.

10/6/2020

**X Aurelia Skipwith**

Aurelia Skipwith

DIRECTOR

Signed by: AURELIA SKIPWITH