

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
PERSONNEL**

**Personnel**

**Part 223 Employment**

**Chapter 7 Reduction in Force (RIF)**

**223 FW 7**

**7.1 What is the purpose of this chapter?** This chapter provides reduction in force (RIF) policy and procedures for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

**7.2 What is the scope of this chapter?** This chapter applies to all Service employees except those in the Senior Executive Service.

**7.3 What are the authorities for conducting a RIF?**

**A.** Government Organization and Employees; Subpart B, Employment and Retention; Chapter 35, Retention Preference, Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments, Restoration, and Reemployment ([5 U.S.C. 3501-3503](#)).

**B.** Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Regulations, Reduction in Force ([5 CFR 351](#)).

**C.** [Restructuring Information Handbook](#), OPM.

**7.4 What terms do you need to know to understand this chapter?**

**A. Competitive areas** are the geographical and organizational limits within which employees compete for retention in a RIF. Employees in a competitive area compete only with each other; they do not compete with employees in other competitive areas.

**B. Competitive levels** are all positions, not people, in a competitive area that are in the same grade (or occupational level) and classification series, and that share similar enough duties, qualification requirements, pay schedules, and working conditions so that an employee may be reassigned from one position to any of the other positions in the level without undue interruption. We determine competitive levels based on each employee's official position, not the employee's personal qualifications. We establish separate competitive levels according to the categories in Table 7-1.

<b>Table 7-1: Establishing Competitive Levels</b>	
<b>We use these categories...</b>	<b>To establish separate levels...</b>
<b>(1)</b> Service	For positions in the competitive service and in the excepted service.
<b>(2)</b> Appointment authority	For excepted service positions filled under different appointment authorities.
<b>(3)</b> Pay schedule	For positions under different pay schedules.
<b>(4)</b> Work schedule	For positions filled on a full-time, part-time, intermittent, seasonal, or on-call basis. You cannot make a distinction among employees in the competitive level based on the number of hours or weeks someone is scheduled to work.
<b>(5)</b> Trainee status	For positions filled by an employee in a formally designated trainee or developmental program.

**C. Furlough** is the placement of an employee in a temporary, non-duty and non-pay status for more than 30 consecutive calendar days, or more than 22 work days if done on a discontinuous basis, but not for more than 1 year.

**D. Local commuting area** is the geographic area where people commute from for employment. It includes any population center (or two or more neighboring ones) and the surrounding localities in which people live and can reasonably be expected to travel back and forth daily to their normal place of employment.

**07/13/15**

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Supersedes 223 FW 7, FWM 438, 01/30/2004**

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
PERSONNEL**

**E. Retention register** is a separate listing of employees for each competitive level. We apply four retention factors (i.e., tenure, veterans' preference, length of service, and performance credit) in establishing separate retention registers for each competitive level that may be involved in a RIF.

**F. RIF notice** is a written communication from a Service official to an individual employee, at least 60 full calendar days before the effective date of release, stating that the employee will be involved in a RIF action.

**7.5 What are the objectives of the Service's RIF policy?** Our objectives are to:

**A.** Explore and implement all possible alternative measures to avoid displacement of employees before the initiation of a RIF, and

**B.** Ensure that we handle administration of a RIF in a timely, equitable manner and according to the Federal regulatory process.

**7.6 When must the Service use RIF procedures?**

**A.** We must use RIF procedures when we release a competing employee from his or her competitive level:

**(1)** By furlough for more than 30 days, demotion, or reassignment requiring displacement; and

**(2)** When the release is required because of lack of work, shortage of funds, insufficient personnel ceiling, reorganization, the exercise of reemployment rights or restoration rights, or reclassification of an employee's position due to erosion of duties; and

**B.** After the Service has formally announced a RIF in the employee's competitive area, it will take effect within 180 days.

**7.7 Who is responsible for carrying out the policy and procedures governing RIFs within the Service?**

See Table 7-2.

<b>Table 7-2: Responsibilities for RIF Policy and Procedures</b>	
<b>These employees...</b>	<b>Are responsible for...</b>
<b>A. The Director</b>	<p><b>(1)</b> Overseeing management of the RIF program within the Service, and</p> <p><b>(2)</b> Approving requests for RIF authority.</p>
<b>B. The Assistant Director - Budget, Planning and Human Capital (AD-BPHC)</b>	Providing for the effective administration of the RIF program within the Service.
<b>C. Regional Directors and Directorate members at Headquarters (HQ)</b>	<p><b>(1)</b> Attempting to avoid a RIF by considering appropriate alternatives and conducting outplacement assistance (see section <a href="#">7.9</a>);</p> <p><b>(2)</b> If a RIF is inevitable, sending a complete, signed request for RIF authority to the AD-BPHC following the procedures in sections <a href="#">7.11</a> and <a href="#">7.12</a>; and</p> <p><b>(3)</b> Determining whether or not:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>(a)</b> We will offer assignment to vacant positions to employees involved in a RIF, and</p>

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
PERSONNEL**

Personnel

Part 223 Employment

Chapter 7 Reduction in Force (RIF)

223 FW 7

Table 7-2: Responsibilities for RIF Policy and Procedures	
These employees...	Are responsible for...
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>(b)</b> If individuals serving under term and similar non-status appointments or those employees occupying excepted service positions will be offered assignment rights.</p>
<b>D. The Chief, Division of Human Resources</b>	<p><b>(1)</b> Advising management and Regional Human Resources personnel on issues involving RIFs,</p> <p><b>(2)</b> Reviewing and updating policies and procedures relating to RIFs, and</p> <p><b>(3)</b> Reviewing requests for RIF authority for technical compliance.</p>
<b>E. Regional Human Resources Officers and the HQ Chief, Branch of Staffing and Classification</b>	<p><b>(1)</b> Advising management on all issues involving and relating to RIFs and performing the mechanics of conducting a RIF; and</p> <p><b>(2)</b> Ensuring that proper negotiation, consultation, and partnership activities occur relative to bargaining units.</p>
<b>F. Supervisors and Managers</b>	<p><b>(1)</b> Ensuring that employees are informed at the earliest possible time that they will or may be affected by the RIF process;</p> <p><b>(2)</b> In conjunction with the servicing Human Resources office, answering employee questions about the RIF process;</p> <p><b>(3)</b> Encouraging employees to ensure that the information in their Official Personnel Folder (OPF) is accurate and current;</p> <p><b>(4)</b> Assisting employees in finding other employment both within and outside the Service and providing information on the Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) and support services (<a href="#">see section 7.14</a>);</p> <p><b>(5)</b> Ensuring that all position descriptions for employees under their supervision are accurate and current;</p> <p><b>(6)</b> Ensuring that RIF notices are prepared and delivered within the 60-day notice period; and</p> <p><b>(7)</b> Recommending positions that should be abolished.</p>
<b>G. Employees who will or may be affected by a RIF and have been notified</b>	<p><b>(1)</b> Keeping informed of RIF activity by attending meetings, reading newsletters, and asking questions;</p> <p><b>(2)</b> Making sure that the information in their OPF is up-to-date and correct;</p> <p><b>(3)</b> Taking advantage of transition assistance programs (<a href="#">see section 7.14</a>);</p>

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
PERSONNEL**

<b>Table 7-2: Responsibilities for RIF Policy and Procedures</b>	
<b>These employees...</b>	<b>Are responsible for...</b>
	<p><b>(4)</b> Ensuring that they have a current job application or resume available for priority placement programs;</p> <p><b>(5)</b> Requesting retirement counseling, as appropriate; and</p> <p><b>(6)</b> Keeping supervisory and Human Resources staff informed of any changes in personal status (e.g., decision to retire, acceptance of another job, etc.).</p>

**7.8 What are the competitive areas for the Service?**

**A. Headquarters**, each office below includes all offices and staff under their specific line authority within the local commuting area:

- (1)** Office of the Director
- (2)** Office of the Chief – National Wildlife Refuge System.
- (3)** Office of the Assistant Director – Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation.
- (4)** Office of the Assistant Director - Ecological Services.
- (5)** Office of the Assistant Director – Migratory Birds.
- (6)** Office of the Assistant Director – International Affairs.
- (7)** Office of the Assistant Director – Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs.
- (8)** Office of the Chief – Law Enforcement.
- (9)** Office of the Assistant Director – Science Applications.
- (10)** Office of the Assistant Director – External Affairs.
- (11)** Office of the Assistant Director – Business Management and Operations.
- (12)** Office of the Assistant Director – Budget, Planning and Human Capital.
- (13)** Office of the Assistant Director – Information Resources and Technology Management.
- (14)** Director – National Conservation Training Center.

**B. Regions 1 – 8.** The Office of the Regional Director and each Office of the Assistant Regional Director, inclusive of all offices/staff under their line authority within the local commuting area make up the separate competitive areas.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
PERSONNEL**

**Personnel**

**Part 223 Employment**

**Chapter 7 Reduction in Force (RIF)**

**223 FW 7**

**7.9 What must be considered before a RIF takes place?**

**A.** To avoid RIF activities, consider alternatives, including, but not limited to:

- (1)** Initiating furloughs not subject to RIF action,
- (2)** Suggesting leave without pay options and job sharing opportunities to affected employees,
- (3)** Seeking early retirement authority for affected organizational units,
- (4)** Separating temporary employees and reemployed annuitants,
- (5)** Terminating reimbursable details,
- (6)** Freezing or limiting hiring and promotions in affected organizational units, and
- (7)** Seeking buyout authority for affected organizational units.

**B.** We should provide outplacement assistance for affected employees, which may include making contacts to place employees with other Service or Departmental offices or encouraging employees to apply for any vacancies for which they qualify.

**C.** If necessary, we may convene teams of supervisors or managers and experienced or appropriately trained Human Resources staff to assist with planning and administering a RIF. This assistance could include providing counseling services, answering questions from employees and managers, and running mock RIFs.

**7.10 Who approves a request for RIF authority?** Only the Director may approve RIF actions, including those that result in a change to a lower grade. Managers and HR staff must also inform the Director about any plans to use any of the alternatives in section 7.9A.

**7.11 Who can submit a request for RIF authority to the Director?** Regional Directors and HQ Directorate members are the only managers who may submit RIF requests. They must submit a signed request for RIF authority through the AD - BPHC, to the Director for approval.

**7.12 What is included in a request for RIF authority?** A request for RIF authority must include:

**A.** A complete and detailed justification for the RIF, including an appropriate discussion of issues, such as lack of funds, full-time equivalents (FTE), and work, including proposed reorganization;

**B.** Alternatives to the RIF that were considered, but were not feasible;

**C.** Identification of the program/office/function the RIF will target;

**D.** A listing of each position that will be abolished by title, series, grade, position description number, and the rationale for how these particular positions were identified for abolishment. Also include the names of affected employees and their work schedule (full-time, part-time, seasonal, or intermittent); and

**E.** A description of placement activities (i.e., attempts to place affected employees within the Region, in other Regions, in other bureaus within the Department, and in other Federal agencies).

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
PERSONNEL**

**Personnel**

**Part 223 Employment**

**Chapter 7 Reduction in Force (RIF)**

**223 FW 7**

**7.13 What are the regulatory procedures to follow in a RIF?** Regulatory procedures for conducting a RIF are found in [5 CFR 351](#), and OPM's [Restructuring Information Handbook](#), and are not repeated in this chapter.

**7.14 What is the relationship of other programs to the RIF program?**

**A. [Career Transition Assistance Plan \(CTAP\)](#).** This program helps individuals to find other employment if they have been or are likely to be separated by a RIF. The CTAP has four components:

**(1) *Career Transition and Support Services*** provide such things as skills assessment, resume preparation, counseling, and job search assistance.

**(2) *Special Selection Priority*** helps agencies select well-qualified, surplus or displaced employees who apply for vacancies in the local commuting area over other candidates.

**(3) *Reemployment Priority List*** helps to place qualified eligible employees or former employees in the local commuting area.

**(4) *Interagency Career Transition Plan*** gives priority consideration for external hires to well-qualified, displaced applicants from other Federal agencies.

**B. **Performance Management System.**** The length of service calculation we use to set the relative position on a retention register incorporates additional time based on an average of the three most recent annual summary performance ratings within the past 4 years.

**(1)** Under the Service's current five-level system, calculations of additional credit includes

- (a)** 20 additional years for a rating of Level 5,
- (b)** 16 additional years for a rating of Level 4,
- (c)** 12 additional years for a rating of Level 3, and
- (d)** No additional credit for ratings of Levels 2 and 1.

**(2)** These figures are averaged and the additional time is credited to the employee's actual service computation date.

/sgd/ James W. Kurth  
Deputy DIRECTOR

Date: July 13, 2015