



**224 FW 3**

## ***Overview of the Awards and Recognition Program***

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224 FW 7, 7/23/2002  
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### **3.1 What is the purpose of this chapter?**

**A.** This chapter describes:

- (1)** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) overall awards and recognition program,
- (2)** The authorities and responsibilities for this and the other awards/recognition chapters ([224 FW 4](#) through [224 FW 6](#)), and
- (3)** Who can approve awards for the Service.

**B.** This chapter and [224 FW 4](#) through [224 FW 6](#) provide policy and procedures for initiating, processing, and approving monetary, nonmonetary, and honor awards for employees, volunteers, partners, citizens, and other entities.

### **3.2 What are the objectives of the Service's awards and recognition program?**

**A.** We use the awards and recognition program as a motivational tool to encourage employees to take an active part in improving Government operations by making full use of their skills and ideas. We recognize and reward those employees whose individual or group efforts have contributed to the efficiency, economy, or increased effectiveness of Government operations or to the achievement of a significant reduction in paperwork.

**B.** The program:

- (1)** Provides acknowledgment for tangible and intangible contributions,
- (2)** Reminds supervisors of the importance of recognizing contributions and providing further incentive, and
- (3)** Achieves a measure of uniformity in the type and degree of recognition given for comparable contributions.

### **3.3 What are the authorities for this chapter and 224 FW 4 through 224 FW 6?**

- A.** Incentive Awards ([5 U.S.C. 45](#)).
- B.** Awards ([5 CFR 451](#)).
- C.** Quality Step Increases ([5 CFR 531, Subpart E](#)).
- D.** [370 DM 451](#), Awards & Recognition Program.
- E.** Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 (FEPCA) ([Public Law 101-509](#)).

### 3.4 What terms do you need to know to understand the chapters that describe the awards program?

**A. An Honor Award** is a prestigious award given to employees, citizens, and partners for significant accomplishments and contributions to the Service and the Department (see [224 FW 6](#) for details). Examples include:

- (1) Distinguished Service,
- (2) Meritorious Service,
- (3) Superior Service,
- (4) Valor,
- (5) Exemplary Act,
- (6) Partners in Conservation,
- (7) Unit Award for Excellence, and
- (8) Health and Safety Award of Excellence.

**B. A Monetary Award** is a cash award given to an employee (see [224 FW 4](#) for details about monetary awards). They include:

**(1) Ratings-Based Performance Awards:** This is a monetary award based on the official rating of record an employee receives through the Service's Performance Management System ([224 FW 1](#)). These awards are generally for a percent of an employee's salary and are only given after the end of the performance year (September 30).

**(2) Quality Step Increases (QSI):** A QSI is another form of a monetary award (for performance) based on an employee's official rating of record. This type of award is also only given after the end of the performance year.

**(3) STAR Awards:** A Special Thanks for Achieving Results award is based on a one-time, significant achievement. Unlike ratings-based performance awards and QSIs, a specific dollar amount is recommended for STAR awards—not a percentage of salary. Employees may receive STAR awards at any time during the performance year.

**C. A Nonmonetary Award** may be a letter of appreciation, time-off award, or other appropriate method of recognizing contributions. See [224 FW 5](#) for more information on nonmonetary awards.

### 3.5 What is the Service's policy on awards and recognition?

**A. Managers and supervisors should:**

**(1)** Appropriately recognize and promptly reward individuals and groups for superior performance, special acts, or other personal efforts that substantially exceed normal expectations and result in improved Government productivity or services;

**(2)** Base awards on merit and recommend and grant awards in an equitable and commensurate manner; and

**(3)** Recognize employees without regard to any non-merit factors, such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or physical/mental disability.

- B. Directorate members and others in management positions must give due recognition to supervisors when supervisors successfully motivate employee interest and participation using the awards and recognition program.
- C. We recognize deserving supervisors, employees, or units when they've made significant achievements in advancing equal employment opportunity.
- D. We use the policy in this chapter as a guideline to negotiate those elements that are negotiable with labor organizations (see [5 U.S.C. 7117](#)).
- E. Granting or not granting awards and QSIs and the amount of awards are a management prerogative and are not subject to our administrative grievance procedures.

**3.6 Who is responsible for administering and implementing the awards and recognition program?**

<b>Table 3 1: Responsibilities under the Awards and Recognition Program</b>	
<b>These employees...</b>	<b>Are responsible for...</b>
<b>A. The Director</b>	(1) Ensuring that the Service has an effective awards program in place, and  (2) Approving or disapproving policy related to the program.
<b>B. The Assistant Director – Budget, Planning and Human Capital</b>	Administering and implementing our awards and recognition program.
<b>C. Service Directorate</b>	Conducting an efficient awards and recognition program in their respective areas of responsibility according to this chapter and 224 FW 4 through 6.
<b>D. Chief, Division of Human Capital (Headquarters)</b>	(1) Providing guidance to Regional Human Resources offices to help them with program needs, clarifying new and existing policies, and developing policies to affect a viable Servicewide program;  (2) For those awards the Director, the Assistant Secretary – Fish and Wildlife and Parks (FWP), or the Secretary must approve, ensuring that the proper reviews take place before they reach the Director's office; and  (3) Providing staff and operational assistance to the Headquarters Directorate and administering the program within Headquarters.
<b>E. Regional Human Resource Officers</b>	(1) Helping to ensure that recommended or approved monetary awards are appropriate and comply with established regulations before payment, and  (2) Ensuring the conformity, compliance, and completeness of award nominations that are referred to Headquarters.
<b>F. Managers and Supervisors</b>	(1) Acquainting themselves with the purpose and operation of the awards and recognition program,  (2) Conducting and promoting the program within their organization,  (3) Periodically discussing the program with their employees to ensure they understand the opportunities available, and  (4) Ensuring that they recognize employees' contributions in a timely manner.

**3.7 What do managers and supervisors need to do to nominate someone for an award, and what records do they need to keep?**

A. The Recommendation and Approval of Awards form, DI 451, is what you use to nominate individuals or teams for an award. (See [section 3.8](#) for information on who approves the nominations.)

B. Detailed procedures for submitting nominations for specific awards are in their respective chapters:

(1) Monetary Awards: [224 FW 4](#),

(2) Nonmonetary Awards: [224 FW 5](#), and

(3) Honor Awards: [224 FW 6](#).

C. An employee's manager or supervisor must maintain records on the employee's award history. Servicing Human Resources offices must maintain award records according to the General Records Schedule. Except for Senior Executive Service (SES) rank awards, we do not print or file an [SF-50](#), Notification of Personnel Action, in the employee's Official Personnel Folder as part of the award process.

**3.8 Who may approve award nominations?** Table 3-2 lists the approval authorities for award nominations. At least two officials must sign [Form DI-451](#) for approval—the Recommending Official and the Approving Authority. The Recommending Official must not sign as both officials. (In addition to the approval authorities in Table 3-2, awards should follow regular supervisory channels before submittal.)

<b>Table 3 2: Award Nomination Approvals</b>			
<b>Award Type</b>	<b>Recommending Official</b>	<b>Reviewing Official</b>	<b>Approving Authority</b>
<b>Honor Awards</b>			
<b>Distinguished Service</b>	Directorate Member	Director and Assistant Secretary – Fish and Wildlife and Parks (FWP)	Secretary
<b>Meritorious Service</b>	Directorate Member	Director	Assistant Secretary – FWP
<b>Superior Service</b>	Directorate Member	N/A	Director
<b>Unit Award for Excellence</b>	Directorate Member	N/A	Director
<b>Valor</b>	Directorate Member	Director and Assistant Secretary – FWP	Secretary
<b>Exemplary Act</b>	Directorate Member	N/A	Director
<b>Rachel Carson Award for Scientific Excellence</b>	Directorate Member	Science Advisor	Director
<b>Service Citizen's Award</b>	Directorate Member	N/A	Director
<b>Director's Corporate Wildlife Stewardship Award</b>	Directorate Member	N/A	Director
<b>Partners in Conservation</b>	Directorate Member	Director and Assistant Secretary – FWP	Secretary
<b>Citizen's Award for Bravery</b>	Directorate Member	Director and Assistant Secretary – FWP	Secretary
<b>Health and Safety Award of Excellence</b>	Directorate Member	Assistant Director – Business, Management and Operations and the Director	The Departmental Awards Committee and the Department's designated Safety and Health Official
<b>STAR Awards</b>			
<b>&gt; \$10,000</b>	Director	Assistant Secretary – FWP	Secretary and Office of Personnel Management

\$5,001 - 10,000	Directorate Member	Director	Assistant Secretary – FWP
\$2,501 - \$5,000*	Manager or Supervisor	N/A	Directorate Member*
≤\$2,500	Manager or Supervisor	N/A	2 <sup>nd</sup> Level Manager or Supervisor
<b>Ratings-Based Performance Awards</b>			
>\$2,500**	Manager or Supervisor	2 <sup>nd</sup> Level Manager or Supervisor***	Directorate Member**
\$50 - \$2,500	Manager or Supervisor	N/A	2 <sup>nd</sup> Level Manager or Supervisor
QSIs**	Manager or Supervisor	2 <sup>nd</sup> Level Manager or Supervisor***	Directorate Member**
<b>Nonmonetary Awards</b>			
≤ \$50 Nominal Value	Manager or Supervisor	N/A	Manager or Supervisor
> \$50	Manager or Supervisor	N/A	2 <sup>nd</sup> Level Manager or Supervisor
<b>Time-off Awards</b>	Manager or Supervisor	N/A	2 <sup>nd</sup> Level Manager or Supervisor
<b>Informal Award</b>	Any official familiar with the employee's accomplishments	N/A	N/A
<b>Length of Service Certificate</b>	Servicing Human Resources Officer	N/A	<p><b>(1)</b> 10 and 20 Years of service certificates are signed by the appropriate Directorate member.</p> <p><b>(2)</b> 30 Years of service, SES members' service, and retirement certificates are signed by the Director.</p> <p><b>(3)</b> 40 and 50 years of service are signed by the Assistant Secretary –FWP.</p>

\*Regional Directors may delegate to Assistant Regional Directors the authority to approve up to \$4,000.

\*\*Regional Directors may delegate this authority to Assistant Regional Directors.

\*\*\*If the 2<sup>nd</sup> Level Manager or Supervisor is a Directorate Member, then there is no need for a Reviewing Official.

### 3.9 What is the Service's policy for holding award ceremonies?

**A.** Managers and supervisors may hold awards ceremonies at which co-workers and friends congratulate awards recipients.

**B.** They may:

**(1)** Only hold this type of ceremony when several employees (more than three) receive honor awards or other incentive awards (e.g., a Regional quarterly awards ceremony), and

**(2)** Use appropriated funds to pay for light refreshments but not for complete meals or alcoholic beverages. The cost of light refreshments in connection with an awards ceremony must not exceed a total of \$500, or \$2.00 per person in attendance, whichever is less.

**3.10 May employees establish a new recognition program?** Employees may establish a new recognition program, but only with the Director's approval. If an employee wants to establish a new program, he/she should work with line management to develop a plan and get approval from the

appropriate Directorate member. The Directorate member sends the plan to the Division of Human Capital, who will review it before sending it to the Director for approval.

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***For information on the content of this chapter, contact the Division of Human Capital. For more information about this Web site, contact [Krista Holloway](#) in the Division of Policy and Directives Management.***

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