



224 FW 5

Nonmonetary Recognition and Informal Honors

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5.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter describes:

A. What nonmonetary awards and informal honors the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) uses to recognize accomplishments,

B. What the requirements and limitations are for these awards and honors, and

C. Who must approve them.

5.2 What are the authorities, definitions of terms, and responsibilities for the nonmonetary recognition and informal honors program? You can find this information for all the chapters that describe our awards programs in [224 FW 3](#).

5.3 What is the Service's nonmonetary recognition and informal honors program? The nonmonetary recognition and informal honors program is one of the ways we recognize contributions to the Service by employees and partners.

Accomplishments may include:

- A. Superior accomplishment of regularly assigned duties,
- B. Exceptional achievement of project goals,
- C. Noteworthy accomplishments over a sustained period, and
- D. Specific contributions to the Service mission.

5.4 What types of awards are available, and who is eligible to receive them?

- A. The types of nonmonetary awards include recognition items, informal honors, time-off awards, and recognitions for length of service.
- B. Employees of the Service, Department, or other Federal agencies and partners can be nominated for a nonmonetary award.
- C. Nonmonetary awards and informal honors cannot be given to contractors, private sector organizations and their employees, customers, volunteers, and private citizens whose contributions directly or indirectly support the mission of the Service (see [5 U.S.C. 45](#)).

5.5 How is someone nominated for a nonmonetary recognition award?

Recommending officials must complete [Form DI-451](#) for all time-off awards and nonmonetary award nominations over the nominal value of \$50. [Form DI-451](#) is always required for a gift card or gift certificate, regardless of the value. The DI-451 is not required for informal awards, length of service recognition, or nonmonetary awards of nominal value (less than or equal to \$50). The approval authorities and required forms are in Table 5-1.

5.6 Who must approve nonmonetary award nominations?

Table 5 1: Nonmonetary Award Nomination Approvals and Presentations				
Award	Recommending Official	Approving Authority	Forms Required	Award Presentation
Nonmonetary Award Item worth ≤\$50 (Nominal Value)	Manager or Supervisor	Manager or Supervisor	N/A	Manager or supervisor gives the recipient the item
Nonmonetary Award Item worth >\$50	Manager or Supervisor	2 nd Level Manager or Supervisor	DI-451 sent to the servicing Human Resources office (HRO)	Manager or supervisor gives the recipient the item and copy of the signed DI-451
Informal Award	Any official familiar with the employee's accomplishments	N/A	N/A	The Recommending Official decides how to present the award
Time-Off Award	Manager or Supervisor	2 nd Level Manager or Supervisor	DI-451 sent to the servicing HRO	Manager or supervisor gives the recipient a copy of the

Length of Service Certificate	Servicing HRO	<p>(1) Directorate member signs 10 and 20 years of service certificates.</p> <p>(2) The Director signs certificates for 30 years of service, SES members, and retirees</p> <p>(3) The Assistant Secretary, Fish and Wildlife and Parks signs 40 and 50 years of service certificates.</p>	<p>(1) N/A</p> <p>(2) N/A</p> <p>(3) Copy of recent SF-50</p>	<p>signed DI-451</p> <p>(1) Manager or supervisor presents the signed certificate and lapel pin</p> <p>(2) and (3) In addition to the certificate and lapel pin, there is an annual 4th of July ceremony that 30-, 40-, and 50-year recipients and their guests may attend to receive recognition</p>
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NONMONETARY RECOGNITION ITEMS

5.7 What are nonmonetary recognition items, and what are the requirements for giving them?

A. Nonmonetary recognition awards include items of nominal value (up to \$50), such as plaques, key chains, paperweights, ball caps, tickets to events, coffee cups, brief cases, or other items.

B. If possible, these items should display the Service or the Department name, logo, title, or mission. Supervisors must be careful when granting nonmonetary awards to avoid any possibility of embarrassment to the Service. If there is a concern about whether or not an award might embarrass the Service or the Department, contact your servicing Ethics Officer.

C. Nonmonetary recognition awards should be of nominal value so that the employee does not incur a tax liability. If the award is valued at more than \$50, the person will be subject to tax withholding and you must get additional approval ([see section 5.6](#)). If someone receives multiple awards over a fiscal year with a combined value of more than \$50, they also incur a tax liability.

D. Any time you give a nonmonetary award, the item must:

(1) Be something that the recipient will value as a symbol of an accomplishment, but not something that serves as an asset or conveys a sense of monetary value, and

(2) Have lasting trophy value (an employee can show the item to coworkers and

friends as a trophy given in appreciation of good work).

5.8 What are the limitations for nonmonetary awards?

A. The maximum value for a nonmonetary award is \$250.00.

B. Gift cards and gift certificates must not exceed the nominal value of \$50. Because gift cards and certificates can be easily exchanged for cash, gift certificates must be taxed regardless of the amount. If given such an item, employees may choose whether the Service should withhold money for taxes or claim the amount of the gift certificate as additional income. A [Form DI-451](#) is always required for a gift card or gift certificate, regardless of value.

C. There is no limit on how many nonmonetary awards an employee can receive in a fiscal year. To ensure employees see the awards as special and to avoid creating tax liabilities for employees, supervisors should not grant nonmonetary awards and present award items several times throughout the fiscal year. Tax liability is determined based on the cumulative value of the awards.

INFORMAL HONORS

5.9 What are informal honors? Informal honors include letters of commendation, certificates, thank you notes, or other similar items. There are no limits on who can grant an informal honor.

TIME-OFF AWARDS

5.10 What is a time-off award? A time-off award is an excused absence given to an employee without charge to leave or loss of pay. We use them to recognize the person's efforts of contributing to the quality, efficiency, or economy of Government operations.

A. You may grant a time-off award to any employee (except employees on intermittent work schedules and members of the Senior Executive Service).

B. Nominees must have achieved a significant accomplishment that contributes to the quality, efficiency, or economy of Government operations. Following are some examples of significant accomplishments:

(1) Making a contribution that exceeds normal expectations and involves a difficult or important project or assignment;

(2) Displaying special initiative and skill in completing an assignment or project before the deadline;

(3) Using initiative and creativity in making improvements in a product, activity, program, or service; and

(4) Ensuring the mission of the organization is accomplished during a difficult period by successfully completing work or a project assignment beyond what is expected while sustaining the normal, everyday workload.

C. Time-off awards never expire.

5.11 What are the limitations and requirements for granting time-off awards?

A. Limitations:

(1) Full-Time Employees: May not receive more than 40 hours for a single award or more than 80 hours total per leave year. These limits also apply to performance-based time-off awards.

(2) Part-Time Employees: May not receive more than:

(a) One-half the average number of hours of work in the employee's biweekly scheduled tour of duty for a single award, or

(b) The average number of hours of work in their biweekly scheduled tour of duty for the leave year (e.g., if a part-time employee has an average biweekly schedule of 60 hours, the employee cannot receive more than 60 hours of time-off awards in a leave year).

B. Requirements:

(1) The immediate supervisor should schedule the use of the time-off award after considering workload implications and sustaining productivity. The employee and the immediate supervisor must agree on the time to use of the time-off award.

(2) Although time-off awards never expire, employees must use them before they leave the Service.

(3) Supervisors and employees should schedule using time-off awards so as not to adversely affect an employee who is in an annual leave "use or lose" situation. If an employee becomes physically incapacitated while using the time-off award, the supervisor may grant sick leave for the period of incapacitation and reschedule the use of the award.

(4) Employees do not have to take time-off awards in the increments received (e.g., if an employee receives a 40-hour award, he/she can take 5 consecutive days off or 1 day at a time as long as the supervisor approves).

5.12 How do time-off awards impact other recognition programs and an employee's leave?

A. Time-off awards are another form of recognition to encourage and recognize exceptional employees for contributions that benefit the Government. They:

(1) Do not replace existing cash or honor awards. Time-off awards may be used in conjunction with monetary awards when the employee's contribution warrants more than one type of award.

(2) Are for specific accomplishments that are generally of a one-time, nonrecurring nature.

(3) Can be used at the end of the performance year as a form of performance award (see [224 FW 1](#) for more information on our performance management

system).

B. Time-off awards are an employee incentive rather than a category of leave. Time-off awards do not:

(1) Convert to a cash payment, even when an employee separates from Federal service.

(2) Transfer if an employee transfers to another Federal agency outside the Department of the Interior. A time-off award may transfer if the employee is going to another bureau in the Department, but only because of an unusual circumstance (e.g., the employee was unable to use the award and the new supervisor agrees to allow the employee to use the award in the new position).

LENGTH OF SERVICE RECOGNITION PROGRAM

5.13 What is the length of service recognition program? Length-of-service certificates and lapel pins are awarded to employees who have completed 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50 years of Government service and for retirees. We do *not* issue certificates and pins for any other number of years of service.

A. We use the employee's service computation date to determine eligibility. The date used on all length-of-service certificates is the day and month of the employee's service computation date and the year in which the anniversary takes place. We use the date of retirement for retirement certificates.

B. Servicing HROs must submit certificates for signature as described in [Table 5-1](#).

C. The servicing HRO sends certificates and lapel pins to the supervisors of all employees for recognition on their anniversary dates.

D. The supervisor may decide how to present the certificate and pin to the employee.

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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