



224 FW 6 *Honor Awards*

Supersedes 224 FW 6, FWM 384,
12/27/2001
Date: February 17, 2011
Series: Personnel
Part 224: Performance and Utilization

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6.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter describes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Honor Awards program.

6.2 What is the scope of this chapter? This chapter applies to employees, partners, and private citizens. Consultants and contractors are not eligible for honor awards.

6.3 What is an honor award? Honor awards are used to provide nonmonetary recognition to employees, partners, and private citizens. Honor awards are:

- A. The most prestigious recognition that the Service or the Department can grant for career accomplishments, exceptional support of our mission, or heroism; and
- B. Separate from monetary awards; however, getting an honor award doesn't prevent an employee from also receiving a monetary award.

6.4 What should managers know about honor awards for employees?

- A. Employees at all grade levels are eligible for an honor award in accordance with the criteria established for each type of award (see [Exhibit 1](#)).
- B. Employees may only receive one of each of the honor awards, except for the Valor and Exemplary Act Awards and the Unit Award for Excellence of Service.
- C. Managers should:

(1) Ensure that they begin the nomination process well in advance of retirement or other separation

from the Service. Honor awards are designed to recognize significant accomplishments and notable careers while an employee is still employed and is able to receive and enjoy the recognition and esteem afforded by the awards. We will only consider nominations received within 6 months after the date of retirement or separation of an employee if there is a special justification fully supporting the delay.

(2) Consider appropriately monitoring employees at various levels in their careers to give them the opportunity to receive honor awards and the incentive to aspire to higher and more prestigious awards. The graduated use of honor awards helps to ensure that worthy employees are appropriately recognized throughout their careers and receive the award that most aptly reflects the significance of the contribution.

(3) Base the award primarily on the employee's contributions while he or she is with the Department of the Interior, although they may cite contributions to other Government agencies where the employee may have worked. Length of service is not a primary factor in granting an honor award, and managers should only use it in the context of recognizing a significant or distinguished career over a substantial period of time.

6.5 What honor awards can employees receive? See [Exhibit 1](#) for detailed information on award nomination criteria, who must approve the awards, and how managers should present them. Table 6-1 below summarizes the awards.

Table 6 1: Honor Awards for Employees	
Award	Description
Distinguished Service Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The highest Departmental honor award a career employee can receive. • Established in 1948. • Given at any time during an employee's career for an outstanding contribution to science, outstanding skill or ability in the performance of duty, an eminent career in the Department, an outstanding record in administration, an outstanding contribution to equal opportunity in Government, an outstanding contribution to energy conservation, or any other outstanding contribution to public service.
Meritorious Service Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second highest honor award a career employee can receive. • Established in 1948. • Given at any time during an employee's career for an important contribution to science or management; a notable career; superior service in administration or in the execution of duties; initiative in devising new and improved work methods and procedures; superior accomplishments in fostering the objective of equal employment opportunity; or important contributions to energy conservation. • Consider nominating employees for this award at the time an important contribution is made or at least during mid-career.
Superior Service Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granted for significant acts, services, or achievements that materially aid or affect the successful accomplishment of the Service's or the Department's mission. • Established in 1971. • The Director may grant this award at the time an employee makes a superior contribution.
Unit Award for Excellence of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental honor award granted to a group of employees who have worked together as a team and whose efforts and contributions are considered to be superior.
Valor Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The highest honor granted by the Department to an employee who demonstrates unusual courage involving a high degree of

	<p>personal risk in the face of danger.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established in 1957. • Nomination requires that the nominee's life was in jeopardy in attempting to save the life of another.
Exemplary Act Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honors an employee or private citizen (see section 6.7) who exhibits bravery when attempting to save the life of another, but while their own life was not in jeopardy. • Established in 1982.
Rachel Carson Award for Scientific Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes an employee or a group of employees who exemplify the best in scientific contribution and application to achieve extraordinary results in fish and wildlife conservation.
Health and Safety Award of Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest Departmental honor award granted to an individual or organization that has performed an outstanding service or made a contribution of unusual value to the health and safety of employees, volunteers, or visitors.

6.6 What should managers know about honor awards for partners and private citizens?

A. Managers may nominate partners and private citizens for an honor award in accordance with the criteria established for each award (see [Exhibit 1](#)).

B. When nominating someone outside of the Service, consider any potential controversial or embarrassing issues that could arise from such an award. Bring any concerns you have to the attention of your servicing Ethics Office for guidance.

C. Nominations received more than 6 months after the date of the contribution will only be considered if there is a special justification fully supporting the delay.

6.7 What honor awards can partners and private citizens receive? See [Exhibit 1](#) for detailed information on award nomination criteria, who must approve the awards, and how managers should present them. Table 6-2 summarizes the awards.

Table 6 2: Honor Awards for Partners and Private Citizens	
Award	Description
Service Citizen's Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commends private citizens for contributions they voluntarily make to public service. • To maintain the significance of this award, never recommend or grant it to several organizations or individuals performing the same service as a precedent because the service was repeated. Consider each case on its own merit.
Director's Corporate Wildlife Stewardship Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes efforts of private corporations operating within the United States and its territories to protect and enhance the Nation's fish and wildlife resources. • Awarded to further the mission of the Service by fostering a cooperative spirit and working relationship with private businesses. • Established in 1991.
Partners in Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department's highest level award to employees and partners, including individuals and groups who work cooperatively with the Service to achieve common goals related to conservation. • Organized by the Assistant Secretary – Policy, Management, and Budget (PMB). • PMB asks for nominations annually. • Established in 1951 (formerly Conservation Service Award).

Citizen's Award for Bravery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The highest honor the Department grants to a private citizen who risks his/her life to save the life of a Departmental employee serving in the line of duty, or the life of another person while on property owned or entrusted to the Department.
Exemplary Act Award for Private Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Granted to a citizen who exhibits bravery in attempting to save the life of another, but while his/her own life was not in jeopardy, while on property owned or entrusted to the Department.

6.8 Who can recommend an honor award?

A. Any employee familiar with the nominee may nominate someone for an honor award. The person making the nomination must route it and the supporting documentation through their normal chain of command. See section 6.9 for details about submitting nominations.

B. For a Unit Award for Excellence in Service, the immediate supervisor or manager most familiar with a group's contribution recommends the group. The manager making the nomination must send it through his/her chain of command to the Division of Human Capital within 6 months of the superior performance cited.

C. Any individual or group of individuals (whether employees or not) who are aware of the facts may nominate someone for a Valor or Exemplary Act award. If the person making the nomination is an employee, the nomination and supporting documentation must be routed through their chain of command.

6.9 How does someone make an honor award nomination?

A. Employees should send honor award recommendations on a [Form DI-451](#) with supporting documentation, including the citation draft (see [Exhibit 2](#) for how to write an award citation and Exhibits [3](#), [4](#), and [5](#) for citation examples), through their chain of command to their servicing Human Resources office (HRO). The citation draft must also be sent electronically to the servicing HRO.

B. A non-Service individual who is nominating someone for a Valor or Exemplary Act award should send their nominations to the HRO that serves that Region. The contact information for the HROs is available on the Human Capital Web site.

C. The citation draft cannot exceed one page in length, and it must be in the format of Exhibit [3](#), [4](#), or [5](#), as appropriate.

D. The servicing HRO reviews the [Form DI-451](#) and citation draft. The HRO also reviews the following records and checks with the following offices when nominations are for Service employees to verify that there are no derogatory findings:

(1) Official Personnel Folder (OPF).

(2) The HRO asks the Office of the Inspector General to review their records.

(3) The HRO asks the Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management in the Director's office to review their records.

E. After checking these records, the servicing HRO sends the nomination and supporting documents through their Directorate member to Headquarters, Division of Human Capital, Attention: Service Incentive Awards Coordinator.

F. The Service Awards Coordinator:

(1) Reviews the nomination package for completeness,

- (2) Sends the nomination package to the appropriate Approving Official (see [Exhibit 1](#) for more information on approval of awards),
- (3) When approved, orders the appropriate certificate(s) from the printer or medals (see [Exhibit 1](#) for more information on certificates and medals), and
- (4) Sends the completed award package back to the servicing HRO.

6.10 What are the criteria, approval authorities, and presentation requirements for each honor award? [Exhibit 1](#) provides details on the criteria and standards for each type of honor award, whose signature should appear on the award nomination ([Form DI-451](#)), and the type and presentation method for the award.

6.11 What is the Service's policy on travel reimbursement for recipients of honor awards?

A. The Service may pay for travel expenses associated with the award recipient's travel and that of a guest to the Departmental Honor Awards Convocation if the recipient or guest is geographically distant from the ceremony's location (see section 6.11C). These travel expenses come from the nominating organization's funds and approval to spend these funds is at the discretion of the nominating office. The Department convocation is usually held in Washington, D.C. in the spring. The Service does not pay for local travel to ceremonies.

B. The Service may also pay travel expenses for employees to be honored at a Presidential award ceremony or a prestigious honorary award ceremony sponsored by another Federal agency or a non-Federal organization that recognizes outstanding Federal employee achievements.

C. Directorate members may approve reimbursement for travel costs for an award recipient's guest to attend a major awards presentation ceremony, funds permitting, if:

- (1) The guest is a family member or has a close association with the award recipient that is the equivalent of a family relationship,
- (2) The costs are for travel directly to and from the site of the ceremony, and
- (3) The rates are authorized under the Federal travel regulations ([41 CFR 301-304](#)).

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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