



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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# CORRESPONDENCE MANUAL 2020



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# Foreword

## About Plain Language

Our Government does most of its day-to-day business through written communications. We want to ensure our message is clear, concise, and easy to understand. Service Manual Chapter 116 FW 1, Plain Language in Fish and Wildlife Service Documents, explains our requirements for using plain language and will help you to prepare correspondence that your readers will understand. Plain language is more than just using simple words and a question and answer format—it is about organizing writing so readers understand it the first time they read it. A few of the techniques for writing plain language include:

- Organizing your thoughts before you begin writing
- Preferring active voice over passive voice
- Keeping sentences short (aim for no more than 20 words)
- Using few or no acronyms
- Omitting needless words
- Developing tables, charts, and figures to explain complex ideas
- Using bullets for lists

Another good source for information about language is the Federal Government's Plain Language Web site ([www.plainlanguage.gov](http://www.plainlanguage.gov)). On that site, you will find practical examples, word suggestions, before and after comparisons, lists of reference books and other resources.

To be an effective means of communication, correspondence must meet certain standards of appearance and style. This Handbook describes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's (Service) standards and will help us prepare better correspondence.

By combining the principles of plain language with the guidelines in Service Manual Chapter 282 FW 2, Managing Correspondence and Official Documents, your correspondence will:

- Meet the Department of the Interior and Service requirements
- Clearly state our message
- Follow a consistent format

After writing your correspondence, using our Data Tracking System (DTS) to move documents through the surname chain in a timely manner is another essential element to ensuring Service employees continue to be effective communicators.

# The Main Interior Building

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1849 C Street NW

Mail Stop 3042  
Washington, D.C. 20240

**Skyline**  
5275 Leesburg Pike  
Fairfax, VA 22203

## Locations and Mailing Addresses of Interior Regional Offices

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### **IR01**

Interior Regional Office  
300 Westgate Center Drive  
Hadley, MA 01035

**(Connecticut, Delaware, Washington D.C., Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia)**

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### **IR02/04**

Interior Regional Office  
1875 Century Boulevard, NE, Suite 400  
Atlanta, GA 30345

**IR02 (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri)**

**IR04 (North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands Iowa)**

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### **IR03**

Interior Regional Office  
One Federal Drive  
Fort Snelling, MN 5511

**(Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin)**

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**IR05/07**

Interior Regional Office  
134 Union Boulevard  
Lakewood, CO 80228

**(Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming)**

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**IR06/08**

Interior Regional Office  
500 Gold Avenue  
SW Albuquerque,  
NM 87102

**IR06 (Texas, Oklahoma)**

**IR08 (Arizona, Southern California, Southern Nevada)**

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**IR09/12**

Interior Regional Office  
911 NE 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97232

**IR09 (Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, Washington State, The Pacific Islands)**

**IR12 (American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, N. Marianas)**

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**IR11**

Interior Regional Office  
1011 East Tudor  
Road Anchorage,  
Alaska 99503

**IR11 (ALASKA)**

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# List of Commonly Used Acronyms

- A/S -Assistant Secretary (nonspecific)
- AMAD Assistant Director - Management Administration
- AEA Assistant Director - External Affairs
- AES Assistant Director - Ecological Services
- AFAC Assistant Director - Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation
- AIA Assistant Director - International Affairs
- AIRTM Assistant Director - Information Resources & Technology Management
- AMB Assistant Director - Migratory Birds
- ANRS Assistant Director - National Wildlife Refuge System
- AWSR Assistant Director - Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration
- BIA - Bureau of Indian Affairs
- CCU - Correspondence Control Unit
- CLE Chief - Office of Law Enforcement
- D - Director
- DD - Deputy Director
- DTS - Data Tracking System
- DS - Deputy Secretary
- ES, SCU, or OES - Secretarial Control Unit
- FNP or NPS - National Park Service
- FW or FWP - Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
- FWS - Fish and Wildlife Service
- IA Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs
- BLM - Bureau of Land Management
- LM - Assistant Secretary - Land and Minerals Management
- NCTC - National Conservation Training Center
- NFWF - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- OCL DOI - Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs
- OIG - Office of Inspector General
- PMB - Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget
- PPA - Office of Policy Analysis
- PPM - Office of Personnel Policy
- S - Secretary of the Department of the Interior
- SOL - Solicitor
- WBR, BOR - Bureau of Reclamation
- USGS - U.S. Geological Survey
- WS Assistant Secretary - Water and Science

## CHAPTER 1

# PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This handbook prescribes procedures and standard formats for preparing correspondence. It supersedes all previous Service guidance on correspondence. This handbook is intended for Washington office employees and it is not meant to change established Regional correspondence procedures, but rather give the Regions a guide as to how correspondence should be sent to the Washington office.

### 1.1 APPLICABILITY

This handbook includes requirements for preparing and processing letters and memoranda developed for the Secretary, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, other officials of the Department, and Service Director to sign.

### 1.2 OBJECTIVES

Our objectives are to:

- Provide clear instructions and uniform guidance for preparing correspondence,
- Improve timeliness and quality of correspondence, and
- Reduce paper waste.

### 1.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

#### **The Correspondence Control Unit (CCU):**

- Receives and assigns all significant correspondence addressed to the Director, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and the Secretarial Control Unit.
- Ensures that all information entered into DTS shows the office to which the action is assigned, due dates, and signature level; that incoming correspondence is uploaded; and that records are assigned to the appropriate office for action.
- Obtains all required Departmental surnames as necessary.
- Ensures due dates are met.
- Properly uploads documents that are signed by the Director, Assistant secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and the Secretary.

**Assistant and Regional Directors (Executive Assistants/Secretaries/Admin Staff):**

- Ensure correspondence is responsive, accurate, written in plain language, grammatically correct, and free of typographical errors.
- Ensure staff meet due dates.
- Upload draft documents and supporting attachments into DTS.
- Use the tools available in DTS, including routing, versioning, closing files, and surnaming.

## CHAPTER 2

# PROCEDURES FOR PREPAING CONTROLLED CORRESPONDENCE

### 2.1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

This chapter describes how to prepare “controlled” correspondence for the signature of the Director, Assistant Secretary, and Secretary.

### 2.2 DEFINITION OF CONTROLLED CORRESPONDENCE

“Controlled” correspondence is correspondence tracked from the time it is assigned until it is finalized (signed, mailed, etc.).

### 2.3 REFERENCE MATERIALS

In addition to this handbook, there are many resources you can reference when preparing correspondence:

- Secretarial Correspondence Bulletins
- U.S. Government Correspondence Manual, 1992
- Government Printing Office Style Manual
- 116 FW 1, Plain Language in Service Documents
- 282 FW, Managing Correspondence and other Official Documents

### 2.4 LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

Keep acronyms to a minimum. When using an acronym, spell it out the first time you use it and put the acronym in parenthesis.

**Note:** Spell out Department of the Interior and then refer to it as the Department (not “DOI”). Spell out U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service then refer to it as the Service (not “FWS”).

Avoid using statements such as “I have reviewed“ or “I know” that make the official signing the correspondence personally responsible for a level of detail not appropriate for his/her office. Do not use contractions.

### **2.4.1 Language in the letter, use:**

I” and “me” for letters prepared for the Secretary’s signature.

“We” and “us” for letters prepared for the Assistant Secretary’s signature. “The Service” and “we” for letters prepared for the Director, Assistant, and Regional Directors.

Region and Regional office are always capitalized when referring to Service Regions. Refer to the Government Correspondence Manual 1992 for complete guidance on capitalization.

## **2.5 BEST TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE LETTERS**

1<sup>st</sup> draft should be content oriented. 2<sup>nd</sup> draft should narrow the scope.

3<sup>rd</sup> draft incorporates appropriate grammar.

**Note:** Strive to keep your letters, memorandums and etc. to 2 pages or less if at all possible, lengthy letters tend to not be read, use attachments to enforce your prose at all possible. This is just a suggestion and not written in stone.

## **2.6 STYLE**

Write correspondence in a clear, direct style. Keep the opening paragraph short and to the point. Use courteous, positive language to establish rapport with the addressee.

When applicable, include the date of the incoming correspondence in the opening sentence.

The Department prefers the following standard opening sentence:

“Thank you for your letter of (date) (concerning, about, requesting, supporting, opposing, providing, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_.”

**Note:** *DO NOT USE* - “This is in response to” or “This responds to.” Avoid using phrases like “As you probably know” or “As you are aware.”

If the incoming is addressed to someone other than the person signing the response, you can explain this in the opening paragraph:

“Thank you for your letter of (date) to Secretary of the Interior (Name) about (issue). Secretary (name) has asked that we respond directly to you’re .....” - several variations are appropriate.

## **2.7 MULTIPLE SIGNATURES**

When more than one person signs an incoming letter, send an identical response to each person who signed the incoming letter. Mention in the letter that you are sending a response to all of the people who signed it.

Appropriate phrasing is:

For three or fewer signatories:

“Thank you for letter of January 2, 2010, also signed by (name(s)), about...”

For more than three signatories:

“Thank you for your letter of January 2, 2010, cosigned by 50 of your colleagues...” If the response is late, the following response(s) is appropriate:

“Thank you for your letter of January, 2, 2010, about (issue). We apologize for the delay.”

“Please accept our apology for the delay in responding.”

The closing sentence of a letter transitions from the main body to the complimentary close. An offer to provide additional information or assistance is a good transition. Provide the appropriate contact name and phone number.

“If we can be of further assistance, please feel to contact me or (name, title) at (phone number).”

## **2.8 APPROPRIATE CONTACTS**

If the Secretary (or Deputy Secretary or any other Department designee) is signing the letter, the Assistant Secretary of Fish and Wildlife and Parks or the Director is the appropriate contact (depending on the issue).

If the Assistant Secretary is signing the letter, the Director is the appropriate contact.

If the Director is signing the letter, the program Assistant Director or the appropriate Regional Director is the contact.

If the program Assistant Director or the Regional Director is signing the letter, the appropriate contact may be anyone the AD/RD designates.

## 2.9 STATIONERY

| Signature Level            | Letterhead                     | Envelope                  |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Director                   | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Service                   |
| Assistant Director         | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Service                   |
| Regional Director          | Regional FWS                   | Service                   |
| Assistant Secretary        | Office of the Secretary        | Office of the Secretary   |
| Associate Deputy Secretary | Associate Deputy Secretary     | Office of the Secretary   |
| Deputy Secretary           | Office of the Deputy Secretary | Office of the Secretary   |
| Secretary                  | Secretary of the Interior      | Secretary of the Interior |

Print continuation pages on plain white paper.

Use electronic letterhead when drafting correspondence; this will remove any doubt on proper formatting watermark your draft with “draft”. The watermark will be removed when doc is signature ready. Stamping Draft throughout the surname process will remove the possibility of a document being signed before it’s cleared. All correspondence for the Director’s signature or higher will be finalized by CCU.

## 2.10 MARGINS

- Left, right, bottom margins: Allow at least 1 inch
- Top margin on the second page: Allow at least 1 inch.
- For short letters, adjust margins to frame the document on the page.
- Do not justify the right margin.

## 2.11 FONT, DATES, AND REFERENCES

Use Times New Roman in 12 point. You may use an 11-point font to limit the letter to one page (and save on paper waste).

Date: Microsoft word you can insert the date and that will update automatically, any time the doc is opened.

Reference Block: immediately below the Departmental seal, flush with the left margin, type the following:

In Reply Refer To:  
FWS/AFHC/012345

In Reply Refer To:  
FWS/R6/AES/12345

In Reply Refer To:  
FWS/R5/12345

The number at the end is the DTS record number.

You may use a font as small as 8 points for the reference block if it limits the correspondence to one page.

## **2.12 ADDRESSES AND SALUTATIONS**

Type the inside address flush with the left margin, at least 2 lines below the “refer to” line, but no more than 5 lines below. The number of lines varies between the reference block and the addressee in order to frame the letter on a page.

Do not use more than 5 lines for the address, and no line should be longer than 4 inches. Use the name, title, organization, city, State, and zip code. The zip code is typed 2 spaces after the name of the State. Spell out the State on the letter, but you may abbreviate it on the envelope.

## **2.13 ACCEPTABLE ADDRESS EXAMPLES**

Mr. John  
E. Doe  
President  
U.S. Sportsmen’s  
Alliance 1234 State  
Street  
Any town, State 12345

On the letterhead do not use any abbreviations in the address block except for the following: D.C., St., Ste, Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., Jr., Sr., 2nd, II, III, NE, NW, SE, SW.

Always spell out Avenue and Boulevard as part of the address on letterhead (you may abbreviate them on the envelope). You may also use P.O. Box instead of spelling out Post Office Box.

## 2.14 APPROPRIATE EXAMPLES OF ADDRESSES AND SALUTATIONS

| <u>Address</u>   | <u>Salutation</u>                    |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Mr. John S. Doe<br>General Manager, Valley<br>Center Municipal Water<br>District<br>P.O. Box 1234<br>Valley Center, California 12345   | Dear Mr. Doe:                        |
| The Honorable John P. Smith<br>Smith: United States Senate<br>Washington, D.C. 20510   | Dear Senator                         |
| The Honorable Jane E. Doe<br>House of Representatives<br>Doe: Washington, D.C. 20515   | Dear Ms. Doe:<br>Dear Representative |
| The Honorable John P. Smith<br>Smith: United States Senator<br>Local Address<br>Here Dallas,<br>Texas 12345  | Dear Senator                         |
| The Honorable Jane E. Doe<br>Member, United States House<br>Doe: of Representatives<br>Local Address<br>Here Dallas,<br>Texas 12345  | Dear Ms. Doe:<br>Dear Representative |
| The Honorable John Doe<br>Chairman/Chairwoman Chairman, Committee on (name)<br>United States Senate<br>Washington D.C.<br>20510  | Dear (Surname):                      |
| The Honorable Jane Doe<br>Representative/Senator: Chairman, Subcommittee on (name)<br>(Name of Parent<br>Committee) House of<br>Representatives<br>Washington, D.C.<br>20515 | Dear                                 |

The Honorable John Smith  
Secretary: Secretary of (Department)  
Washington, D.C. (zip)

Dear Mr./Madam

Please refer to the U.S. Government Correspondence Manual 2016 for a complete list of addressees and salutations. Use the formal salutation—do not use first names. Use a colon after names.

## **2.15 BODY**

Begin the text of the letter two lines below the salutation, flush with the left margin. Begin each paragraph flush with the left margin; indent subparagraphs ½ inch. Single space all letters, regardless of length.

Double space between paragraphs; use two spaces between the end of one sentence and the beginning of the next to create a visual break between sentences.

## **2.16 SUCCEEDING PAGES**

All correspondence should be concise and limited to one page if possible. If you need a second or more pages, you must carry over at least two full lines of text to the additional page, not including the closing line and the signature block.

The addressee's name should begin approximately 1 inch from the top of the margin, flush to the left and include the title and full name of addressee. The page number should be flush to the right.

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| The Honorable John H. Smith | 2 |
| Mr. Dale Jarrett            | 2 |

Continue the text two lines below the addressee name.

## **2.17 COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE**

Type “Sincerely,” two lines below the last paragraph/text and to the right of center. (Use “Respectfully” for letters addressed to the President.)

Sincerely,

## 2.18 SIGNATURE BLOCK

Type the signature block on the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> line below the complimentary close.

| Signature Level         | Use this Signature Block                                    |
|-------------------------|---|
| Director                | Name<br>Director<br>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service          |
| Assistant Secretary FWP | Name<br>Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks |
| Deputy Secretary        | (Name)<br>Deputy Secretary                                  |
| Secretary               | (Name)<br>Secretary   |

## 2.19 ATTACHMENTS OR ENCLOSURES

Type the enclosure or attachment notation two spaces below the signature block, flush with the left margin. Be sure to describe the enclosures in the body of the letter.

Letters have enclosures

Memos have attachments

## 2.20 COURTESY COPIES (CC :)

Type cc: lines two spaces below the signature block or two spaces below the attachment or enclosure blocks. You may type this block on a second page.

In Reply Refer To:  
FWS/AMB/072327

Ms. Kelly R. Hepler  
President  
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies  
1100 First Street NE, Suite 825  
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear Mr. Hepler:

Thank you for your letter of April 14, 2020, in regards to the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies' (Association's) interest in the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Duck Stamp). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) appreciates your support in promoting the purchase of the Duck Stamp to continue our conservation efforts. The Service welcomes your comments on ways to increase the usability and sales of the Duck Stamp.

The Service takes great pride in the Duck Stamp program and the collaboration that has ensured its success. To date, the sale of Duck Stamps has raised over \$1.1 billion to conserve over 6 million acres of habitat in our National Wildlife Refuge System. We will continue to promote the multi-faceted benefits of habitat conservation provided by these public lands and to provide access to hunters and others engaged in outdoor recreation activities.

The Service applauds the waterfowl hunting community, which has always been the primary source of consumers for the Duck Stamp and one of our greatest partners in conservation. We will continue to encourage hunters, anglers, conservationists and others interested in our wildlife resources to learn about, and support, the investment they have made. We will continue our efforts to engage both traditional and new partners in becoming part of the conservation movement by purchasing Duck Stamps.

We will also continue to seek innovative ways to increase future sales. The number of states that participate in the e-stamp program is now at 28. The Service will continue to offer all states the opportunity to apply for and enter into an agreement to provide this service to the community and to work with all consumers, our distributors, and others to make the program as efficient as possible.

The Service looks forward to working with the Association and others to promote and improve the Duck Stamp Program. Thank you again for your continued support and recommendations. Please contact Mr. Jerome Ford, Assistant Director for Migratory Birds at 202-208-1050 with questions and additional recommendations.

Sincerely,

X

Aurelia Skipwith, Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## CHAPTER 3

# ELECTRONIC PROCESSING & CORRESPONDENCE HANDLING

### 3.1 ELECTRONIC CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE ASSIGNED BY SECRETARIAL CORRESPONDENCE UNIT (SCU)

SCU assigns the correspondence to CCU. CCU assigns it to the appropriate Regional or program office and assigns the appropriate task by signature level.

If the task assigned is (0) Prepare Draft Response, the responsible office will prepare a draft response, upload the response into DTS prior to due date, and assign the record back to CCU. CCU will then ensure the proper surnames are received, including, as appropriate, the Department's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs (OCL).

### 3.2 ELECTRONIC PROCESSING OF CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE ASSIGNED BY SCU

If the Regional office is tasked (0) Prepare Draft Response, the Region is responsible for drafting the response, obtaining appropriate Regional surnames, and assigning the DTS record back to CCU. CCU will then obtain all Washington office surnames and package the file for signature.

If a Headquarters program office is tasked (0) Prepare Draft Response, the Headquarters program office is responsible for drafting the response, obtaining appropriate surnames within their program, sending it to CCU. CCU will then ensure that any additional Headquarters and Departmental office surnames are obtained.

### 3.3 REQUIRED SURNAMES

#### **For the Regions:**

- Regional office that prepared the reply
- Regional External Affairs CLA office
- Regional Director
- CCU

- AEA-CLA
- AEA
- Appropriate program office
- CCU
- Director
- Any additional surnames requested by SCU office

**For Headquarters:**

- Office that prepared the reply
- CCU
- AEA-CLA
- AEA
- Additional program office(s) if necessary
- Director
- Any additional surnames requested by SCU office

### **3.4 SIGNED COPIES INTO DTS**

CCU will finalize all Congressional assignments in DTS. CCU will ensure that the final signed copies are uploaded in DTS, the original letters are forwarded to AEA-CLA, and the appropriate action is taken to ensure final close out.

### **3.5 CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE ASSIGNED BY CCU**

**For the Regions:**

For DTS assignments assigned to Regions with (0) Prepare Draft Response, follow the same instructions as assignments from SCU

For DTS assignments assigned to the Regions with (1) Prepare Reply, the Regions will prepare a draft, obtain the necessary surnames, and prepare the document for the Regional Director or designee to sign. (Current process requires the congressional draft be sent to CCU for review, once that review is completed the doc will be sent back to the Regions to sign). Once signed, the Region will upload the signed copy into DTS and route it back to CCU so CCU can close out the record.

The Regional office is responsible for mailing correspondence signed by the Regional Director.

### **For Headquarter Programs**

Same procedures as the Regional Offices Except, once draft is uploaded into DTS and surnamed by appropriate person's, assign the record to CCU and they will get the remainder of surnames and clearance for signature  
Some Congressional correspondence may require a response by e-mail or telephone, or no action at all. In these cases, upload the e-mail into DTS or summarize and date the telephone call and upload it into DTS. Then notify CCU so they can close out the record. (Normally when this happens, you have already coordinated with AEA-CLA and CCU.)

Once the Congressional correspondence has been signed by the appropriate office, please send the original signed copy to CCU. CCU closes out the DTS record, which includes scanning signed documents and ensuring the enclosures/attachments (if applicable) are available. CCU will mail most congressional letters originating or signed in Headquarters to ensure they are properly closed out in DTS. CCU will work with programs that have more than 10 letters being signed and mailed.

**Note:** All congressional correspondence signed in the Regions must have the Regional AEA-CLA surname. Congressional correspondence signed by the Assistant Directors, Director, and higher must be surnamed by AEA-CLA in Headquarters.

### **3.6 NON-CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE ASSIGNED BY THE EXSEC OFFICE**

Use the same procedures as for congressional correspondence except, unless required, you do not need to include AEA-CLA in the routing in DTS.

**Note:** Any correspondence that will be signed in the Director's office or higher should be printed on electronic letterhead and watermarked draft during the review process

### **3.7 INTERIM LETTERS/REPLIES**

Authors must make every effort to respond fully and completely to incoming correspondence by the due dates established, especially those controlled by SCU

If you cannot provide a full response by the assigned due date, you must prepare an interim letter immediately. For highly controversial or major policy issues that will not be resolved by the assigned due date, include a "Note to Reviewers" that explains the delay.

- Interim/partial response letters should include the following:
  - Statement that we are unable to provide all the requested information within the desired time frame
  - Any information gathered to date
  - A statement telling the reader when the remaining information will follow
- Interim/acknowledgement response letters include the following:
  - A statement that we are unable to respond within the desired time frame
  - Reason(s) for the delay

Once an interim letter has been written and signed, CCU will work with the appropriate office(s) to obtain a new due date, especially on correspondence that SCU is tracking.

### **3.8 WHITE HOUSE REFERRALS**

All White House referrals (WHR) are assigned by SCU to CCU. CCU assigns them to the appropriate program or Region. Current standards for WHR are that all will be responded to within 10 days of receipt, signed at the RD/AD level and requires no clearance, unless indicated in the DTS record.

**Note:** Do not send official correspondence to the White House. These letters must be vetted through the appropriate offices. The Office of the Secretary has the final approval authority for any official letter that will be sent to the White House.

### **3.9 MEMORANDA**

Use a memorandum for all official correspondence with individuals or organizations inside the Department.

### **3.10 FORMAT**

Reference Block: Use the same reference block for letter correspondence (see section 2.11).

Memorandum Line: Type the word “Memorandum” flush with the left margin and at least 3 to 5 lines below the reference block. Lines may vary in order to frame a document on the page.

“To” Line: Type “To:” flush with the left margin, two lines below “Memorandum.” The title of the addressee begins directly under the last ‘m’ in ”Memorandum.” Use

the complete title of the addressee whenever possible. List multiple addresses with each one beginning a new line. If you have to carry over a line, indent two spaces.

“Attention” Line: When applicable, the “Attention:” line is part of the “To:” line and you type it immediately below the title of the addressee.

“Through” Line: When applicable, type the “Through:” line flush with the left margin, two lines below the “To” line. Use the complete title of the reviewing official *whenever possible—do not use a person’s name*.

“From” Line: Type “From:” line flush with the left margin, two lines below the “To” or “Through” line. Use the complete title of the signatory. Do not use the individual’s name.

“Subject” Line: Type “Subject:” flush with the left margin, two lines below the “From” line. Describe the main issue and the requested action, if any.

If you are requesting a response by a specific time, put the request in the subject line in parenthesis and in bold (i.e. **Response due: 30 days from date of this memorandum**). It is the policy of the Service to allow at least 30 days response to memoranda. Anything less than 30 days needs the Director’s approval.

Body of Memorandum: The body begins two lines below the subject line. Second and subsequent pages should have a typed page number 1-inch from top, flush to the right, followed by two hard returns. You may number subparagraphs for clarity; however, you must not use an “a” without a “b” or a “1” without a “2.”

Attachments: Be sure to describe any material that accompanies a memorandum in the body of the memo as an attachment. Type ”Attachment” at least three lines after the last line of text, flush with the left margin.

Approval/Disapproval Line: When the memo requests the approval of a specific action by signature, use approval and disapproval signature blocks. If the memo contains an attachment, begin the approval/disapproval lines two lines below the attachment line.

Include a date line to show when the decision was made.

For memoranda asking for the Secretary’s approval, the memorandum is written as if the Secretary has approved the requested action. A transmittal memorandum must accompany the request indicating that we are seeking an approval of the request.

## CHAPTER 4

# BEST BUSINESS PRACTICES FOR USING DTS

### 4.1 ASSIGNING CORRESPONDENCE

CCU will route correspondence to the Regional and program offices' Executive Assistants. Regional and program offices are responsible for routing to the appropriate offices within their Regions or programs.

Regional offices: Subordinate offices should route correspondence through their Regional Director's office. The Regional Director's office will route it to the appropriate Washington office.

Program offices: Subordinate offices should route correspondence through their Assistant Director's office. The Assistant Director's office will route it to the appropriate office.

**Note:** Subordinate offices should never route correspondence outside of their Regional or Assistant Director's office. Any correspondence that needs to be routed to a different program should always be routed through the originating office's Assistant Director, Regional Director, or CCU.

### 4.2 PREPARE DRAFT RESPONSE

When Regional or program offices receive a task to Prepare Draft Response, they prepare the response for the appropriate signature (Director, Assistant Secretary, and Secretary) and send it to CCU in Word format through DTS.

### 4.3 PREPARE REPLY

When Regional or program offices receive a task to Prepare Reply, they prepare the reply for their AD's/RD's signature. Once signed, the AD/RD office should upload the signed reply to DTS and alert CCU that the assignment is complete.

### 4.4 APPROPRIATE ACTION

Program and Regional offices receive many assignments labeled as "Appropriate Action." This means that Regional or program offices determine the appropriate action for the file (e.g., reading for informational purposes, filing, distributing

internally, etc.).

#### **4.5 CLOSING TASK ASSIGNED FOLDERS**

All offices need to close their folder in the routing tree after their task is complete. To do this, you enter the date you completed the task in the “Task Completed Date” field in the lower left-hand side of the record. This closes your folder and takes the record out of your inbox on your Home Screen. Depending on the record, once you’ve surmamed it,

you may need to route it to the next office (e.g., your program Assistant Director’s office) for their surname. To do this, you click on their routing and insert the date you are assigning it to them in the “Task Assigned Date” field. Also click the “Send Email” box so that the assistants in that office are aware of the assignment. Then click the Save icon. This opens the assignment in their inbox and automatically generates an email to remind them they have a task.

#### **4.6 WORK FLOW REPORT**

We highly recommend that program and Regional offices use the work flow report to track correspondence from beginning to end. This report allows offices to close the folders once they have completed tasks and still track documents.

#### **4.7 ADDRESSEE LINE IN DTS**

All records entered in DTS must have an addressee. If the overall action of the DTS file is to send official correspondence (e.g., a response to an inquiry), the addressee is the person to whom the correspondence is going.

If the action is for the Director to read, sign, or approve a document, then the addressee is the Director.

#### **4.8 SENDING E-MAILS AND CHECKING DTS INBOX**

All DTS users should mark the “Send E-mail” box when assigning a task to another office. DTS users should not rely on e-mail notification to check their DTS inbox. Check your DTS inbox occasionally during the workday so that you are always aware of assignments.

**Note:** Do not rely on e-mail for notification of assignments in DTS. Be proactive and check your inbox regularly. “I did not receive e-mail notification” is not an adequate excuse for missing a deadline on an assignment.

## **4.9 NAMING PROTOCOL OF UPLOADED FILES**

All Regional and program offices should use the document control number and an easily searchable name/subject for all documents they upload into the DTS system.

## **4.10 NOTES TO REVIEWERS**

When using DTS to send information to a Regional or the Director's office, the originating office should upload a note to reviewers. This is especially important for the receiving office to understand why they are receiving the information and what they should do with it.

## **4. 11 USING COMMENTS IN DTS**

Use the main comment section for overall routings. Use the routing comment for surname or a comment specific to the office assigned. Do not use the comment fields as a note to reviewers. They cannot be printed.

## **4.12 ADDING NEW DTS USERS**

Program and Regional offices should contact CCU when they need to add new users to DTS. Provide the following information:

- Correct spelling of the new user's name,
- Office/branch they are assigned to, and
- Level of access requested.

Programs and Regional offices should also notify CCU in a timely manner when we need to remove a DTS user's access to DTS (e.g., separation from the Service, change in position).

## **4.13 DELETING DCN FILES**

Program or Regional offices should contact CCU before deleting any DTS records. If you accidentally delete a DTS record, contact CCU as soon as possible so CCU can attempt to recover the file.

## **4.14 USING CORRECT DATABASES**

### **SENSITIVE DATABASE**

This database is restricted to certain users and is used for correspondence dealing with sensitive information (Inspector General investigations; complaints;

performance reviews; promotions) or correspondence containing personal information such as social security numbers.

#### BRIEFING PAPER DATABASE

This database is open for all users for briefing papers. (EXCEPTION: We upload Federal Register Notices with Briefing Papers into the FWS Federal Register Database)

#### FWS NATIONAL DATABASE

All other records not pertaining to Sensitive, Foreign Travel, or Briefing Papers are in this database.

#### FOREIGN TRAVEL DATABASE

All records pertaining to travel outside the continental United States are in this database. This is a secure database with limited access.

#### FEDERAL REGISTER DATABASE

All records pertaining to Federal Register documents are in this database.

#### PUBLIC MAIL DATABASE

All Public mail sent to the Service to be distributed via DTS.

### **4.15 MAINTAINING A HEALTHY INBOX**

DTS users should maintain their inboxes so there are not more records in them than they can possibly track. If you have more than 25 open records in your inbox, you may miss an important assignment. If you need help in managing your inbox, please contact CCU.

### **4.16 TRAINING MODULE**

DTS users should complete the new training module (new and seasoned users). Completing this training will help give you the information you need to use DTS effectively and correctly. CCU tracks who has completed the training.

### **4.17 CLOSING THE OVERALL FILE**

When correspondence is signed at the Assistant Director/Regional Director/Director level, administrators should fill in the Signed Date, Signed By, and Closed Date located in the main screen of the document. Be sure you enter the date the document was actually signed—not the date it reached your desk.