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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Assistant Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
Washington, D.C. 20230

JUL 29 2005

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
United States Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Inhofe,

I am writing in response to your letter of July 19, 2005, regarding the questions surrounding Mr. Rick Piltz and his involvement with the U.S. Climate Change Science Program (CCSP). As you know, CCSP was announced by President Bush in 2002 to integrate federal research on global change and climate change, as sponsored by 13 federal departments and agencies (the National Science Foundation, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Department of State, the Department of Interior, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Defense, U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Smithsonian Institution) in liaison with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The goal of the program is to develop the best and most useful climate science information to support decision making through an open and transparent process.

The agencies participating in CCSP, fund and supervise an interagency office – the Climate Change Science Program Office (CCSPO) – that fosters program development and coordination by coordinating research and observation, implementing communications activities, and providing Secretariat support for the CCSP Director and the CCSP Principals (an interagency governing body for CCSP incorporating a senior representative from each of the 13 CCSP agencies, CEQ, OSTP, and OMB).

My responses to your questions appear in bold below.

1. Please provide a thorough description of Mr. Piltz's academic and professional background including formal education, degrees held, scientific credentials, awards, and previous positions held both in and outside of government service.

Mr. Piltz worked as a contract employee, referred to as a "term" employee, for a number of years for the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR). This organization provided the staff services of Mr. Piltz, and others, to CCSPO by means of an agreement between NASA and UCAR. Mr. Piltz's functional title was Senior Associate. While we desire to comply fully with your requests, we believe it would be more appropriate to contact Mr. Piltz's former employer, UCAR, for his

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academic and professional information. (UCAR Point of Contact: R. Gene Martin, Director, Joint Office for Scientific Support, UCAR; Phone: 303 497-8682; Email: gmartin@ucar.edu)

2. Please describe the circumstances surrounding Mr. Piltz's departure including, but not limited to, whether Mr. Piltz was asked to resign from his position or whether he stepped down of his own accord.

As a result of information that had reached me regarding a number of complaints Mr. Piltz had been expressing to his colleagues at CCSPO, I scheduled a meeting with him and requested that the CCSPO Director and the CCSP principal representative of DOE attend the meeting as well. This meeting took place on February 22, 2005. During this meeting, I suggested he consider resigning or we might decide to terminate him if his pattern of complaints could not be resolved. I also suggested, at the end of the meeting, he consider his options and get back to me in the next few days. On February 28, 2005, Mr. Piltz submitted a letter of resignation from his position.

3. Please describe the nature of the documents Mr. Piltz accuses the White House Counsel on Environmental Quality (CEQ), and specifically Mr. Philip Cooney, of having altered. Were these public policy reports, summaries of research findings, budget documents, policy-oriented documents, or scientific studies?

Mr. Piltz has commented about two reports: a draft of the 10-year Strategic Plan for the Climate Change Science Program, and a draft of the Program's annual report to Congress, *Our Changing Planet*. Both final reports, by law, must be submitted to Congress. The Strategic Plan describes priority scientific questions to be addressed by the CCSP over the coming years. *Our Changing Planet* is a program report describing highlights of recent research activities and plans for future research to be conducted with funds included in the President's annual budget request.

4. Please describe the process by which these documents are reviewed. Is it customary or extraordinary for other executive branch agencies and/or CEQ to review and edit documents of the type in question?

The referenced reports were produced through a customary interagency review process. The thirteen CCSP agencies, CEQ, OMB, and OSTP reviewed the drafts, provided comments, and suggested editorial revisions. The comments and suggested revisions were considered by CCSPO scientific staff working under my supervision or by me, and revised drafts were prepared. These drafts were again circulated for final clearance and release. As Director of the CCSP, I have had final authority over the editorial process and the approved content of all CCSP reports disseminated since 2002.

5. Approximately how many edits were made by Mr. Cooney? To the best of your knowledge, did any specific edits made by CEQ misrepresent or misstate scientific facts of data? If any edits contained specific errors, were these errors contained in the final document, or corrected as part of the inter-agency process?

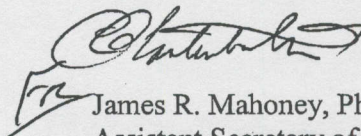
Mr. Cooney proposed many specific edits, as did others involved in the interagency review process for the two reports. These proposed edits ranged from corrections of grammatical errors to suggestions for insertions or deletions of text. To the best of my knowledge, the edits proposed by CEQ did not misstate any specific scientific fact, but some of the proposed edits challenged the degree of confidence to be attached to various scientific statements. As is the case for all reports produced through the CCSP interagency process, some of the proposed edits were accepted and others were modified or rejected. In my capacity as CCSP Director, I approved the final versions of the drafts. To the best of my knowledge, no errors were contained in the two reports.

6. Did Mr. Piltz undergo an exit review at the Department of Commerce or CCSP prior to his departure? If so, please describe the Department's exit procedure, who conducted this review, and the questions asked. To the best of your knowledge, did Mr. Piltz remove any internal documents, drafts of documents, computers, computer disks, related computer equipment, or other departmental materials from CCSP?

Mr. Piltz did not have an exit interview through CCSP, but we understand he completed a form at the request of UCAR upon the termination of his employment with that organization. During his tenure as a member of the professional staff of the office for the program, Mr. Piltz had access to many program documents. I have no direct knowledge as to whether Mr. Piltz removed internal documents, drafts, computer disks, or other related materials. However, I note that subsequent to his departure from the office, he provided samples of confidential documents to the public.

If you need further clarification on these issues or have any other questions concerning the Climate Change Science Program, I would be happy to meet with you or your staff.

With best regards,



James R. Mahoney, Ph.D.
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for
Oceans and Atmosphere, and
Director, Climate Change Science Program