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Directives and Standards

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| Subject: | Honor Awards |
| Purpose: | To establish Bureau of Reclamation requirements and criteria for Department of the Interior honor award citations. The benefit of this Directive and Standard (D&S) is to ensure consistent application of the honor awards program. |
| Authority: | 5 U.S.C. Part 451, Department of the Interior 370 DM 451.3 |
| Approving Official: | Director, Policy and Administration |
| Contact: | Human Resources (HR) Division, Program Management Branch, 84-58100 |

1. **Introduction.** The purpose of awarding departmental honor awards is to provide non-monetary recognition to employees of the Department. Honor awards convey the highest formal acknowledgment that the Department can grant for career accomplishments, exceptional support of the Department's or Reclamation's mission, and heroism. This D&S establishes the requirements and criteria that must be met on the Recommendation and Approval of Awards Form (DI-451) before submitting an honor award citation. Appendices A, B, and C provide a template DI-451 for honor awards, outline the processes, and provide instructions on Formatting Honor Awards.
2. **Applicability.** This D&S applies to employees who submit an honor award nomination and supervisors and directors who sanction the nominations and citations to be sent to the Secretary, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, or Commissioner for approval and/or concurrence.
3. **Definitions.**
 - A. **Citizen's Award for Bravery.** A heroic act honor award for private citizens who risk their lives to save the life of a departmental employee serving in the line of duty or the life of any person, who is on property owned by or entrusted to the Department. This award is approved by the Commissioner and does not require a DI-451.
 - B. **Citizen's Award for Exceptional Service.** Reclamation-specific award for private citizens or organizational partner, including volunteers. This award is approved by the Commissioner and does not require a DI-451.
 - C. **Derogatory Information.** For the purposes of this D&S, derogatory information is that which reflects unfavorably on the agency or an individual's performance, leadership, or character, and causes formal administrative or disciplinary action to be taken. Derogatory information may be discovered during review of Official Personnel File (OPF), Civil Rights (CR)/Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), or Office of the Inspector General (OIG) records. Examples of personnel-related derogatory

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information include an action effected such as a suspension due to a disciplinary and/or adverse action; garnishment orders; and adverse suitability and security findings, although these examples are not all-inclusive. Examples of OIG-related derogatory information includes open and closed investigations involving fraud, waste, and abuse, or inefficiency in a departmental program or operation. Examples of EEO-related derogatory information include findings of discrimination in which an employee was the named individual responsible for the discrimination. *Maintenance and disclosure of any such items must be consistent with the Privacy Act and applicable Office of Personnel Management regulation (e.g., 5 CFR 293 et seq.).*

- D. **DI-451.** A departmental form required for all honor awards except as noted.
- E. **Director's Award of Excellence.** This is an entry-level award for all employees to recognize sustained excellence in leadership and specific directorate mission accomplishments. A formal citation is written and approved by the respective director, and this award does not require a DI-451.
- F. **Distinguished Service Award (DSA).** The highest level honor award granted to career employees of the Department. Recipients must have demonstrated extremely significant, long-term contributions to the Department's programs and missions. These awards are approved by the Secretary of the Department.
- G. **Exemplary Act Award.** A heroic act honor award for Department employees or private citizens who attempt to save the life of a Department employee serving in the line of duty or the life of any other person who is on property owned by or entrusted to the Department, when risk to their own lives is not an issue. These awards are approved by the Commissioner.
- H. **Meritorious Service Award (MSA).** The second highest departmental honor award presented to employees who have made exceptional continuing contributions to Department or Reclamation mission accomplishment. These awards are approved by the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science.
- I. **Reclamation Service Award.** This is an entry-level award for employees with more than 5 years of service with Reclamation. A formal letter is written to officially commend an employee for on-going contributions or accomplishments within his/her job responsibilities. These letters of award are approved by the Commissioner and do not require a DI-451.
- J. **Retirement Recognition Award.** All retiring employees with more than 5 years of service with Reclamation are eligible to receive a formal letter and certificate to officially acknowledge and recognize their dedication, professionalism, and years of service. Both the letter and certificate are approved by the Commissioner and do not require a DI-451.

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- K. **Superior Service Award (SSA).** This is an entry-level honor award for career employees of the Department who have made significant achievements or performed significant acts or services that materially aid the mission of the Department. These awards are approved by the Commissioner.
 - L. **Unit Award for Excellence of Service.** For exceptional contributions(s) of employee groups, units, or teams. This award is approved by the Commissioner.
 - M. **Valor Award.** The highest heroic act honor award granted to employees or private citizens for heroic acts or unusual bravery. This award is approved by the Secretary.
4. **Responsibilities.**
- A. **Employees.** Employees are responsible for:
 - (1) Initiating an honor award nomination by completing the DI-451 (see Appendix A). The DI-451 must go through the proper review and approval process (i.e., submitted through supervisory channels to the appropriate director and regional HR and CR/EEO office for review) (Appendix B).
 - (2) Submitting the citation through supervisory channels after receiving confirmation from the award coordinator that the DI-451 has been approved.
 - B. **Managers and Supervisors.** Managers and supervisors are responsible for:
 - (1) Nominating deserving employees for appropriate level honor awards in a timely fashion for:
 - (a) special project completion; or
 - (b) deserving contributions and accomplishments (see criteria in Paragraphs 5.A. through C.).
 - (2) Validating that the nominee is eligible to receive an honor award (i.e., manager or supervisor is not aware of potential derogatory information).
 - (3) Validating that the honor award citation is well written and contains the descriptive information necessary to endorse the nomination (see criteria in Paragraphs 5.A. through C.).
 - (4) Concurring and agreeing to all information in the honor award citation by surnaming the yellow correspondence copy of the citation and signing as the *Recommending Individual* on the DI-451.

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- C. **Servicing HR Award Coordinators.** Servicing HR award coordinators are responsible for:
- (1) Initiating review of nominees OPF for any derogatory information. This review is certified on the DI-451 in the “Justification” by stating the OPF was reviewed and no derogatory information was found, including the initials of the reviewer.
 - (2) Initiating review of employee records with servicing CR/EEO office. This review must be completed and certified on the DI-451 prior to submitting the citation to the appropriate director.
 - (3) Ensuring that the citation meets departmental and Reclamation award regulations and criteria. The award coordinator with the oversight of the regional HR manager reviews the citation for substantive content, correct grammar, and format (see Paragraph 5.A. through C. and Paragraph 6.A. through F.). If criteria are not met, then the award citation is returned to the author for revision.
 - (4) Verifying that the yellow surname copy of the citation is approved by the nominator, nominees’ supervisor/manager, and the appropriate director.
 - (5) Routing all honor awards to the Denver HR Division award coordinator.
- D. **Directors.** Directors are responsible for:
- (1) identifying and soliciting nominations throughout their organization for specific award ceremonies, i.e., manager’s conference;
 - (2) ensuring that the citation meets Department and Reclamation honor award regulations, guidelines, and criteria;
 - (3) validating the eligibility of the nominee to receive an honor award, i.e., staff has reviewed the employees OPF for any derogatory information, which must be noted on the DI-451 in the “Justification” section; and
 - (4) concurring and agreeing to all information in the honor award citation by surnaming the yellow correspondence copy of the citation and signing as the *Reviewing Official* on the DI-451.
- E. **Denver HR Division Award Coordinator.** Upon receipt of the nomination and the original DI-451 the Denver HR Division award coordinator is responsible for:

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- (1) Ensuring that the submitting regional HR office reviewed the nominee's OPF for any derogatory information. This review is certified on the DI-451 in the "Justification" by stating the OPF was reviewed and no derogatory information was found, including the initials of the reviewer.
- (2) Initiating review of employee records with Reclamation's CR/EEO office, the Department's CR/EEO office, and the OIG. These reviews must be completed and certified on the DI-451 prior to submitting the citation to the Commissioner's Office.
- (3) Ensuring that the citation meets Department and Reclamation award regulations and criteria. The Denver HR Division award coordinator with the oversight of the HR manager reviews the citation again for substantive content, corrects grammar, and format (see Paragraphs 5.A. through C. and Paragraphs 6.A. through F.). If the criteria are not met, then the award package is returned to the submitting regional office for revision.
- (4) Verifying that yellow surname copy of the citation is approved by the nominator, nominees' supervisor/manager, and the appropriate director.
- (5) Routing all honor awards to the Director, Policy and Administration for review, after Paragraphs 4.D.(1) through (4) have been satisfactorily completed.

F. Servicing CR/EEO Officers and Specialists. Servicing CR/EEO officers and specialists are responsible for:

- (1) Reviewing EEO complaint and administrative inquiry records under their control for the previous 5 years to determine:
 - (a) whether the nominee has been the named individual responsible for discrimination in a complaint in which the Department, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), or Federal district court has issued a Finding of Discrimination;
 - (b) whether the nominee has been the named individual responsible for discrimination in an on-going or pending EEO complaint or administrative inquiry;
 - (c) whether EEO records show a pattern of the nominee being the named individual responsible for discrimination in a series of on-going or pending EEO complaints or administrative inquires; and

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- (d) whether the nominee presently is the named individual responsible for on-going or pending discrimination complaint in the EEOC or Federal district court.
- (2) Denying the nomination by surnaming the appropriate section of the DI-451 and completing the "Finding" section with a denied response, if review of EEO records shows the nominee has been the named individual responsible for discrimination in a complaint in which the Department, the EEOC, or a Federal district court has issued a Finding of Discrimination within the past 5 years.
- (3) Approving the nomination by surnaming in the appropriate section of the DI-451 and completing the "Finding" section with an approved response, if review of EEO records demonstrates the nominee has not been the named individual responsible for discrimination in an EEO complaint or administrative inquiry.
- (4) Developing a briefing paper, if the nominee meets the conditions in Paragraphs 4.F. (1) (b), (c), or (d), for the approving official detailing information relevant in determining the appropriateness of the nomination. The briefing paper shall include the following:
 - (a) date(s) of complaint/inquiry;
 - (b) specific complaint of discrimination or issue investigated;
 - (c) status of the complaint/inquiry, if applicable;
 - (d) resolution of the complaint/inquiry, if applicable; and
 - (e) statement of concurrence or non-concurrence of the nomination. The statement of concurrence/non-concurrence is not solely based on the mere existence of a series of complaints, but rather on an in-depth analysis of the nature of the issues raised, the nominee's actions in relation to sound management practices and the contents of the departmental or EEOC decisions or communications regarding the complaints.
- (5) Providing the briefing paper as outlined in Paragraph (4) above, in a sealed envelope, to the director of the organization the nominee is in. If the director decides to forward the nomination in spite of a statement of non-concurrence by the servicing CR/EEO officer, the servicing CR/EEO officer will forward the briefing paper to the Reclamation CR/EEO officer, who will review and revise the paper as appropriate and forward in a sealed envelope to the Commissioner as the final approving official.

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- (6) Conferring with the appropriate EEO office(s) to ensure review of all relevant EEO complaint and administrative inquiry records and following the process described in Paragraphs 4.F.(1)(a), (b), (c), or (d), if the nominee was transferred from another Reclamation directorate in the previous 5 years.
- G. **Senior Advisor to the Commissioner.** The Chief of Staff will review the content of all senior executive service citations prior to approval of honor award nomination. Concurrence will be noted on the yellow correspondence copy of the citation and by signing as *Reviewing Official* on the DI-451 before forwarding to the Commissioner for final approval.
- H. **Director, Policy and Administration.** The Director, Policy and Administration will review the content of all citations other than those in Paragraph 4.F. above, prior to final approval of honor award nomination. Concurrence will be noted on the yellow correspondence copy of the citation and by signing as *Reviewing Official* on the DI-451 before forwarding to the Commissioner for final approval.
5. **Content Criteria for Nominations.** Employees at all grade levels are eligible to be nominated for an honor award in accordance with criteria established for each category of award. Employees may receive only one MSA and only one DSA in the course of their career.
- A. **Highest Level Awards.** The DSA recognizes employees for 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 exceptional contribution to the public service. The nominee exemplifies the highest standards and dedication to public service and significantly benefits the Department.
- B. **Mid-Level Awards.** The MSA recognizes continuous and distinctive achievements, within or beyond an individual's area of responsibility, and significantly advances the Department's mission in the following areas:
- (1) leadership, ability, and devotion to duty displayed over a considerable period, reflecting noteworthy credit on Reclamation and/or the Department and resulting in the advancement of program goals;
 - (2) extraordinary service or accomplishment demonstrating exceptional ingenuity and ability while contributing to improved efficiency of operations in program areas within Reclamation and/or the Department;

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- (3) performance of assigned duties in such an outstanding manner and with such identifiable benefits as to be clearly deserving of one of the highest forms of recognition; or
 - (4) development and improvement of methods and procedures demonstrating original thinking and resulting in extraordinary tangible and/or intangible benefits.
- C. **Entry-Level Awards.** The SSA recognizes on-going superior service in one of the following categories and criteria:
- (1) **Management and Supervision.** Includes employees who accomplish work through the direction of other employees. Managers, supervisors, and team leaders may be nominated under this category. Nominees' achievements must reflect contributions to mission or strategic goals, innovations in resources management, leadership, or process and procedural improvement.
 - (2) **Scientific Achievement.** Includes employees working in the scientific occupational groups, such as biologist, hydrologists, etc. Nominees' achievements must reflect contributions in providing decision makers with reliable scientific information, foster outstanding environmental stewardship; notable scientific accomplishments; assess/predict environmental changes; innovations in their area of expertise; or process and procedural improvement.
 - (3) **Professional Achievement.** The professional achievement category is designed for engineers, accountants, etc. Nominees' achievements must reflect contributions to dollar savings, quality improvement, important project completion, or process and procedural improvement.
 - (4) **Administrative or Technical Support.** Includes employees in administrative or technical management, budget, finance, information technology, HR, etc. Nominees' achievements must reflect significant acts or services that materially aid or effect the successful accomplishment of a particularly difficult operation, project, or assignment that reflects on the individual or Reclamation; economy of operation; or a process and procedural improvement.
 - (5) **Clerical/Support Services.** Includes employees, whose typical responsibilities involve processing transactions, performing office support, and completing miscellaneous clerical and assistance duties. Nominees' achievements must reflect consistent superior performance related to assigned duties; direct assistance through actions or ingenuity that are beneficial to the organization; actively contribute to the overall mission; economy of operation; or a process and procedural improvement that are deemed deserving of special recognition.

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6. **Requirements, Formatting and Processing for all Honor Award Nominations.**
- A. Any employee may recommend an honor award by completing and submitting a DI-451 to the nominee's supervisor for concurrence and transmittal through their award coordinator to the approving official.
 - B. Before final approval of an honor award, the servicing HR office must ensure that there is no derogatory information in the nominee's OPF. Potential derogatory information includes issues such as discriminatory actions, garnishment orders, suitability, and security findings.
 - C. Denver's HR Division must confirm with the CR/EEO office, the Department's Office of Civil Rights, and the OIG that the nominee is not involved in any prior/current or pending matter that might result in a finding against the nominee, Reclamation, or the Department.
 - D. Potential derogatory information will be forwarded to the respective director from where the award was initiated for evaluation to determine if there is justification to disapprove the award. In this evaluation, the director will consider time frame, seriousness, relationship to award, notoriety and impact of the incident, and other relevant factors.
 - E. Citations must be clearly written, in plain language, with sufficient detail so that a layman can understand the contributions of the nominee. Specific examples of accomplishments must be included to clearly show the nominee has met the awards criteria.
 - F. See Appendix B to identify responsible parties and coordination of the surnaming and review process, and Appendix C for formatting instructions.