



Awards

Recognition Program

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) wants to be Your Employer of Choice. As a mission-oriented organization that is committed to accomplishing our conservation goals, we understand that our employees are our most precious resources. Therefore, to ensure the success of our programs, we have developed an exciting employee recognition program that encourages employee excellence through a variety of methods including honor awards, monetary awards for special acts and performance, non-monetary awards, time off awards, and quality step increases.

The two main purposes of the Service's recognition and awards program are to allow flexibility in recognizing individual and group achievements and to acknowledge contributions that lead to the achievement of results. The program encourages all employees to actively share in improving government operations, enhance productivity and creativity, and optimize personal job satisfaction.

Monetary Awards

The Service has two types of monetary awards, the Special Thanks for Achieving Results (STAR) Award and the Performance Award.

STAR Award - the award amount should be proportional to the value of the individual team accomplishment, considering the overall benefit to the Federal Government. Second level supervisors may approve STAR awards up to \$1000. Awards that range from \$1000 to \$4000 are approved by Assistant or Regional Directors and STAR Awards that are more than \$4000 are approved by the Director.

Performance Awards - Supervisors can grant rating based (performance) awards for employees who receive a rating of record of superior (level 4)

or exceptional (level 5). Specifically, employees who receive an exceptional rating (level 5) are eligible and must be considered for a 3 to 5 percent cash award, a quality step increase, a time off award (40-hours or less), or a combination of these options. Employees who receive a superior rating (level 4) are eligible and must be considered for a 1 to 3 percent cash award, a time off award (40-hours or less), a non-monetary award, or a combination of these. Second level supervisors can approve monetary awards up to \$2,000. Assistant and Regional Directors must sign all awards over \$2,000.

Quality Step Increase

A Quality Step Increase (QSI) is recognition based on an evaluation of an employee's performance that clearly shows a high level of performance for a period of six months or more. A QSI raises the employee's base pay and results in long-term benefits to the employee. An employee cannot receive more than one QSI within any 52-week period. A recommendation for a QSI should be submitted as soon as possible, but no later than 60 days after completion of the period of performance that is being rewarded so that the award will be timely. QSI's must be approved by the Assistant Director or Regional Director. Only employees who receive an exceptional (level 5) performance rating are eligible for a QSI.

Non-Monetary Awards

Non-monetary recognition and informal honors are granted to employees for: superior accomplishment of regular duties; exceptional achievement of project goals; noteworthy accomplishments over a sustained period of time; or, specific contributions to the Service mission.

Examples of Non-Monetary Awards include items of nominal value such as

coffee cups, key chains, or similar gifts under a \$50 cash value.

Informal Honors are designed to be a quick tool for managers to immediately recognize an employee's achievements. A few examples include items with the Service logo (shirts or coffee mugs) or letters of appreciation. Another great option is a gift card/certificate to a local store. While employees are responsible for the tax liability on gift cards, this type of recognition is very popular.

Honor Awards

Honor awards are the most prestigious recognition that can be granted by the Department of the Interior for career accomplishments, exceptional support of the Department's mission, or heroism. Honor awards are meant to be given for progressive career recognition and should be awarded at successive career milestones.

Distinguished Service Awards are for career employees who have demonstrated extremely significant long-term contributions to Departmental programs and missions. Typically nominees have previously received the Meritorious Service Award. Distinguished Service Awards are signed by the Secretary and are generally only presented at the annual Honor Award Convocation. Recipients receive a gold medal, a citation, and a certificate.

Meritorious Service Awards are for career employees, typically in mid-career, who have made exceptional continuing contribution(s) to the Department or Service mission. Typically, the employee has received one or more Superior Service Awards. Meritorious Service Awards are signed by the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks and presented at a local ceremony. Recipients receive a silver medal, a citation, and a certificate.

Superior Service Awards are presented to career employees who have made significant contributions(s) to the Service. Superior Service Awards are signed by the Director and presented at a local

ceremony. Recipients receive a citation and a certificate.

The Unit Award for Excellence of Service is for exceptional contribution(s) of employee groups, units, or teams. Unit Awards are signed by the Director and presented at a local ceremony. Recipients receive a citation and a certificate.

Heroic Act Honors

Heroic Act Honors are honorary recognition granted to employees for heroic acts or unusual bravery in the face of danger.

Valor Award - for employees who risk their lives while attempting to save the life of another.

Citizen's Award for Bravery - for private citizens who risk their lives to save the life of an employee serving in the line of duty or the life of any other person, while on property owned by or entrusted to the Service.

Exemplary Act Award - for employees or private citizens who attempt to save an individual's life or for private citizens who attempt to save the life of an employee serving in the line of duty, or any other person while on property owned by or entrusted to the Service, when risk to their own lives is not an issue.

For questions or concerns, please contact your human resources office or visit the Division of Human Capital's Internet site (<http://www.fws.gov/humancapital/hr/awards.html>).

Remember, all awards require a completed DI-451, Department of the Interior Award Certification.

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