U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Quick Reaction Report: EPA Must Take Steps to Implement Requirements of Its Scientific Integrity Policy

Report No. 13-P-0364 **August 28, 2013**

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Abbreviations

EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
ORD	Office of Research and Development

Hotline

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Inspector General

13-P-0364
August 28, 2013

At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

During an Office of Inspector General review of a hotline complaint, we evaluated the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's progress in implementing certain requirements of its agencywide *Scientific Integrity Policy*. In March 2009, the President issued a memorandum to the heads of all executive departments and agencies for taking action to guarantee scientific integrity throughout the executive branch. In the memorandum, the President instructed each agency to implement rules and procedures for ensuring the integrity of the scientific process within their agency. The EPA enacted its *Scientific Integrity Policy* in February 2012. The policy provides a framework intended to ensure scientific integrity throughout the EPA, and describes the role of an agencywide committee of scientific integrity officials to implement this policy.

This report addresses the following EPA Goal or Cross-Cutting Strategy:

- *Advancing science, research, and technological innovation.*

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Affairs at (202) 566-2391.

The full report is at:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2013/20130828-13-P-0364.pdf

Quick Reaction Report: EPA Must Take Steps to Implement Requirements of Its Scientific Integrity Policy

What We Found

Although an agencywide training program is required by the agency's *Scientific Integrity Policy*, the EPA has not developed or implemented a program to instruct the EPA's employees on the requirements and standards of scientific integrity. In addition, the EPA has not generated and made publicly available an annual report on the status of scientific integrity within the agency as required by the policy. The policy makes the EPA's Scientific Integrity Committee responsible for implementing these requirements. As a result of the committee's lack of progress in implementing these requirements, the EPA is less equipped to:

- Provide leadership for the agency on scientific integrity.
- Promote agency compliance with the *Scientific Integrity Policy*.
- Keep the agency's senior leadership informed on and involved with the agencywide status of scientific integrity.
- Detect violations of scientific integrity.

What We Recommend and Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the EPA's Deputy Administrator direct the Scientific Integrity Committee to (1) develop and implement agencywide training on the *Scientific Integrity Policy* in a manner that will minimize further delay in the EPA's adherence to policy requirements, (2) complete and issue an annual report on the status of scientific integrity in the agency before its first formal review of the policy, and (3) provide the Deputy Administrator with a written plan describing the action plan and milestones for implementing and completing the training and issuing the annual report.

We met with the EPA's current interim scientific integrity official in July 2013 to discuss the findings and recommendations in our draft quick reaction report. In response to our draft quick reaction report the EPA's interim scientific integrity official included corrective actions with planned completion dates, or a statement that actions were complete, in response to all three OIG recommendations. The corrective actions meet the intent of our recommendations. Recommendations 1 and 2 are resolved with corrective actions underway. Recommendation 3 is completed and closed. No additional agency response to this report is required.

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

August 28, 2013

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Quick Reaction Report: EPA Must Take Steps to Implement Requirements of Its Scientific Integrity Policy
Report No. 13-P-0364

FROM: Arthur A. Elkins Jr.

TO: Bob Perciasepe, Deputy Administrator

This is our report on the subject evaluation conducted by the Office of Inspector General of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This report contains findings that describe the problems the OIG has identified and corrective actions the OIG recommends. This report represents the opinion of the OIG and does not necessarily represent the EPA position.

Action Required

You are not required to provide a written response to this report because the corrective actions with estimated completion dates were provided in response to the draft quick reaction report. Please update the EPA Management Audit Tracking System as you complete the planned corrective actions. We will post this report to our website at http://www.epa.gov/oig.

If you or your staff have any questions regarding this report, please contact Assistant Inspector General for Program Evaluation Carolyn Copper at (202) 566-0829 or copper.carolyn@epa.gov, or Director for Special Program Reviews Eric Lewis at (202) 566-2664 or lewis.eric@epa.gov.

Purpose

During a separate Office of Inspector General review of a hotline complaint, we found conditions that caused us to assess the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's progress in implementing certain requirements of its *Scientific Integrity Policy*. Specifically, we evaluated whether the EPA has:

- Developed and implemented training on scientific integrity for all the EPA's employees.
- Generated and made publicly available an annual report on the status of scientific integrity within the agency.

Background

On March 9, 2009, the President issued a memorandum to the heads of all executive departments and agencies for taking action to guarantee scientific integrity throughout the executive branch. In the memorandum, the President instructed each agency to implement rules and procedures for ensuring the integrity of the scientific process within their agency. Further, the President assigned the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy the responsibility for conferring with the heads of executive departments and agencies and recommending a plan to achieve these goals.

In response to the President's memorandum, the former EPA Administrator issued a memorandum in May 2009 to all the EPA's employees notifying them of the President's memorandum and that it provided important guideposts for how the EPA should conduct and use science. The former Administrator's memorandum stated that the President's memorandum provides the agency with a unique opportunity to further demonstrate a deep commitment to scientific integrity in the pursuit of the agency's vital mission of protecting human health and the environment. The former Administrator emphasized the agency should look for opportunities to strengthen existing policies and procedures that ensure scientific integrity within the agency.

The director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy issued a memorandum in December 2010 to provide guidance to agencies to implement the Administration's policies on scientific integrity. The director instructed agencies to develop policies that, among other things, do the following:

1. Ensure a culture of scientific integrity.
2. Strengthen the actual and perceived credibility of government research.
3. Facilitate the free flow of scientific and technological information, consistent with privacy and classification standards.
4. Establish principles for conveying scientific and technological information to the public.

In accordance with these memorandums, the EPA enacted its *Scientific Integrity Policy* in February 2012. The policy provides a framework intended to ensure scientific integrity throughout the EPA. The EPA's *Scientific Integrity Policy* also established a Scientific Integrity Committee, which is chaired by the scientific integrity official and consists of deputy scientific integrity officials from the agency's program and regional offices. Under the *Scientific Integrity Policy,* the Scientific Integrity Committee is charged with implementing, reviewing and revising, as needed, the policy governing specific areas of scientific integrity. Specifically, the Scientific Integrity Committee is responsible for:

- Overseeing the development and implementation of training related to scientific integrity for all the EPA's employees.

- Generating and making publicly available an annual report to the EPA science advisor on the status of scientific integrity within the agency. This report should highlight scientific integrity successes, identify areas for improvement and develop a plan for addressing critical weaknesses, if any, in the agency's program and regional offices.

According to the *Scientific Integrity Policy,* in advance of completing the annual report, the Scientific Integrity Committee is required to conduct an agencywide annual meeting on scientific integrity that will include the involvement of the EPA's senior leadership, reports from offices and programs, and an opportunity for input from the EPA scientific community. The Scientific Integrity Committee is also expected to review the policy every 2 years for its effectiveness and adherence with applicable rules and regulations.

Prior Audit Coverage

On July 22, 2011, the OIG issued audit report "Office of Research and Development Should Increase Awareness of Scientific Integrity Policies," Report No. 11-P-0386. This report addressed whether the EPA's Office of Research and Development had controls to address scientific integrity and research misconduct, and whether those controls were effective. The EPA OIG found that ORD science staff was unaware of the EPA's *Principles of Scientific Integrity*, which went into effect in March 2000. The EPA OIG also found that ORD had not updated the Principles of Scientific Integrity E-Training since June 2005. Consequently, the EPA OIG made recommendations for improvement, including that the assistant administrator for ORD:

- Periodically test the effectiveness of controls to address scientific integrity and research misconduct.

- Continue working with the unions to update and implement the Principles of Scientific Integrity E-Training. Changes to the course were to include: (a) making the e-training mandatory for all ORD staff, (b) ensuring that the updated course contains real-life examples, and

(c) creating a system for linking to current contact information for reporting instances of scientific integrity and research misconduct.

In response to the OIG report, ORD agreed with the recommendations and stated that the agency will make the Principles of Scientific Integrity E-Training mandatory for scientific and technical staff and to update the course to contain real-life examples and links to current contact information for reporting instances of scientific and research misconduct by July 2012. However, ORD noted that the agency was in the process of developing a new agencywide policy on scientific integrity, had named an acting scientific integrity official, and would establish deputy scientific integrity officials in each of the regions and offices.
The agency noted that these officials will serve as members of the EPA's Scientific Integrity Committee, responsible for overseeing scientific integrity, and addressing allegations of scientific integrity violations. The committee would also be charged with standardizing the agency's scientific integrity training and ensuring that the appropriate EPA staff complete the necessary training courses.

Scope and Methodology

We conducted our work from March to May 2013 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform a review to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our review objectives.

We reviewed the *Scientific Integrity Policy* to determine the agency's Scientific Integrity Committee roles and responsibilities. We also reviewed the President's March 2009 memorandum, the EPA Administrator's May 2009 memorandum, and the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy's December 2010 memorandum. We interviewed the EPA's interim scientific integrity official and staff from the Office of the Science Advisor regarding the status of developing and implementing training for the EPA's employees on the *Scientific Integrity Policy*. We also interviewed these individuals to determine the status of fulfilling other requirements for the Scientific Integrity Committee under the policy.

Status of Implementing Training and Reporting Requirements of Scientific Integrity Policy

We met with the agency's interim scientific integrity official on March 14, 2013, to determine the status of developing and implementing training for the EPA's employees on the *Scientific Integrity Policy*.[1] We found that the EPA has not

[1] In a May 8, 2013, memorandum from the Acting EPA Administrator, a new interim scientific integrity official was named. The interim scientific integrity official we met with on March 14, 2013, is now the former official.

developed or implemented agencywide training on the *Scientific Integrity Policy*. Although the policy has been in place since February 2012, the former interim scientific integrity official reported that the Scientific Integrity Committee had not completed development and implementation of an agencywide training program. He noted that part of the delay in developing the training was due to the fact that they invited union participation. He further stated that it has taken quite a while for the union to decide whether and how they wanted to participate in the training development.

During our meeting with the former interim scientific integrity official, he could not provide any projected milestone dates or timeframes for when the committee will complete this training requirement. On May 1, 2013, according to the audit follow-up coordinator for ORD and the agency's Management Audit Tracking System, the estimated completion date for the agencywide training on the February 2012 *Scientific Integrity Policy* has been revised to December 31, 2013. However, neither the audit follow-up coordinator nor the Management Audit Tracking System entry indicated whether the agency's Scientific Integrity Committee was involved in establishing the completion date for the agencywide training.

During our March 14, 2013, meeting, we also discovered that the EPA has not generated and made publicly available an annual report on the status of scientific integrity within the agency because the committee has not yet created it, as required by the *Scientific Integrity Policy*. The former interim scientific integrity official could not provide any timeframe for when the committee will complete the first annual report. The former interim scientific integrity official stated that the committee would have to develop and implement training on the *Scientific Integrity Policy* for the EPA's employees before they can complete the annual reporting requirement.

Conclusion

As a result of the Scientific Integrity Committee's lack of progress in implementing the training and annual reporting requirements, the committee cannot fully determine the EPA employees' compliance with the agency's *Scientific Integrity Policy*. In addition, required determinations of the effectiveness of the policy and the status of scientific integrity in the EPA are lacking and will continue to be delayed until the policy requirements are implemented. By implementing these key requirements in its *Scientific Integrity Policy*, the EPA would be acting in accordance with the President's 2009 memorandum for ensuring the integrity of the scientific process and further demonstrating the EPA's commitment to scientific integrity in the pursuit of the agency's vital mission of protecting human health and the environment.

Recommendations

We recommend that the EPA's Deputy Administrator direct the Scientific Integrity Committee to:

1. Develop and implement agencywide training on the *Scientific Integrity Policy* in a manner that will minimize further delay in the EPA's adherence to policy requirements.

2. Complete and issue an annual report on the status of scientific integrity in the EPA before its first formal review of the policy.

3. Provide the Deputy Administrator with a written plan describing the action plan and milestones for implementing and completing the training and issuing the annual report.

Agency Response to Draft Quick Reaction Report and OIG Evaluation

The current interim scientific integrity official responded to our draft quick reaction report on June 14, 2013 (appendix A). The official commented that our draft quick reaction report lacked recognition of what has been done thus far to implement the *Scientific Integrity Policy* within the agency. During a follow-up meeting to discuss the official's comments, we informed the official that our findings and recommendations are based on information we obtained from the former interim scientific integrity official during a meeting held in March 2013 and our review of the policy. We informed the current official that the former official reviewed our draft quick reaction report and did not dispute the facts we reported.

We met with the EPA's current interim scientific integrity official in July 2013 to discuss the findings and recommendations in our draft quick reaction report. The current interim scientific integrity official's response to our draft quick reaction report provided updated information on the status of implementing training and reporting requirements under the *Scientific Integrity Policy*. Specifically, the response included corrective actions with planned completion dates or indication that the recommended action was completed. Specifically:

- The Scientific Integrity Committee plans to finalize the scientific integrity training module by December 31, 2013, and make it available through Skillport (i.e., the agency's e-learning training portal). According to the current interim scientific integrity official, this date was coordinated and approved by the committee.

- The committee has reviewed an outline for the annual report on scientific integrity and, after receiving input at the annual meeting on June 25, 2013, plans to finalize the report by September 30, 2013.

- The committee has outlined a plan for moving forward with completing the training and issuing the annual report. The Deputy Administrator has been briefed, provided input and agreed with the plan presented to him. The deputy director for the EPA's Office of the Science Advisor confirmed that the briefing to the Deputy Administrator, which occurred on June 7, 2013, covered progress on implementing the *Scientific Integrity Policy* and related matters.

In accordance with EPA Manual 2750, the OIG has determined that the corrective actions meet the intent of our recommendations. Recommendations 1 and 2 are considered resolved with corrective actions underway. Recommendation 3 is completed and considered closed. No additional response to this report is required. However, the involved agency office should update the EPA Management Audit Tracking System as planned corrective actions are completed, and notify the OIG if there is a significant change in the agreed-to corrective actions.

Our detailed responses to agency comments on the draft quick reaction report are included in appendix B. Additional attachments provided with the agency's signed and dated comments can be located at http://www.epa.gov/oig.

Status of Recommendations and Potential Monetary Benefits

RECOMMENDATIONS						POTENTIAL MONETARY BENEFITS (in $000s)	
Rec. No.	Page No.	Subject	Status[1]	Action Official	Planned Completion Date	Claimed Amount	Agreed-To Amount
1	5	Direct the Scientific Integrity Committee to develop and implement agencywide training on the *Scientific Integrity Policy* in a manner that will minimize further delay in the EPA's adherence to policy requirements.	O	EPA Deputy Administrator	12/31/2013		
2	5	Direct the Scientific Integrity Committee to complete and issue an annual report on the status of scientific integrity in the EPA before its first formal review of the policy.	O	EPA Deputy Administrator	09/30/2013		
3	5	Direct the Scientific Integrity Committee to provide the Deputy Administrator with a written plan describing the action plan and milestones for implementing and completing the training and issuing the annual report.	C	EPA Deputy Administrator	06/07/2013		

[1] O = recommendation is open with agreed-to corrective actions pending
C = recommendation is closed with all agreed-to actions completed
U = recommendation is unresolved with resolution efforts in progress

Appendix A

Agency's June 13, 2013 Comments on the OIG's Draft Quick Reaction Report

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Response to Office of Inspector General's Draft Report Entitled *Quick Reaction Report: The EPA Must Take Steps to Implement Requirements of its Scientific Integrity Policy*

FROM: Glenn Paulson, Ph.D.
Interim Scientific Integrity Official for EPA

TO: Arthur A. Elkins, Jr.
Inspector General

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and additional information on this Draft Quick Reaction Report. In addition to general comments on the conclusions and recommendations, technical comments are provided in Attachment 1.

I have personally met with the Office of Inspector General management several times to develop coordination procedures on actions related to allegations of scientific misconduct and therefore I am surprised by the tone and method that is being used for this draft report. During our last meeting, I suggested that OIG attend the Agency's Scientific Integrity annual meeting scheduled for June 25. You have already received and accepted a formal invitation to this meeting. Further, the hot line call mentioned in this report and the report's recommendations do not appear to me to have any connection with each other.

OVERALL COMMENTS

In February 2012, the EPA published a Scientific Integrity Policy that built on our long history of scientific safeguards to further ensure that sound science drives agency decision-making. The EPA's ability to fulfill its mission to safeguard human health and protect the environment depends on sound scientific analyses, and the Agency remains committed to scientific integrity. When dealing with science, it is the responsibility of every EPA employee to conduct, utilize, and communicate science with honesty, integrity, and transparency, both within and outside the agency. When Bob Perciascepe (then Deputy Administrator) announced the Scientific Integrity Policy in his "All EPA Employees" memorandum dated February 16, 2012, he stated that the Policy became effective immediately. Each employee received this email, demonstrating the Policy's importance.

The draft report demonstrates both a lack of clear understanding of the Policy and also any recognition of what has been done thus far to implement it at the Agency. For example, the draft does not acknowledge that the Policy not only incorporates but goes well beyond the OSTP

guidance, and in addition clearly demonstrates the EPA's commitment to Scientific Integrity through a training element, as well as an annual meeting and report.

The draft report's core concern is that the development of training and the generation of an annual report have not been completed. The draft report does not acknowledge that, in fact, work on both is well advanced, and substantial efforts have been devoted as necessary to bring that work to its current status. The draft report fails to acknowledge the ongoing work that the Scientific Integrity Committee is undertaking to ensure consistent implementation of the Policy. The Interim Scientific Integrity Official has, in addition to leading the Committee, addressed several allegations of scientific misconduct that have been reported by outside entities.

These cases have been resolved, and also discussed with the OIG. Finally, we have also been working with the OIG to develop procedures to ensure coordination on allegations of scientific misconduct or other violations of the Scientific Integrity Policy (See Attachment 2). The draft Quick Reaction Report leaves the erroneous impression that there is little work being done on scientific integrity issues. While completion of the training module and the annual report are important, these are only two of the activities currently underway, and they do not impede agency managers and employees from complying with the Policy or detecting and reporting violations of the Policy.

As identified in this response, the draft report contains substantial misstatements. Since the work outlined in the draft report's Recommendations is already well advanced, finalization of the OIG draft report would not contribute to effective completion of that work. By failing to acknowledge these activities and arriving in the midst of their completion, the draft Quick Reaction Report, if made final, would be superfluous. It would, however, further delay the work of the Scientific Integrity Committee and staff in implementation of the Policy. To respond to this draft, OSA's scientific integrity staff has already been diverted away from developing the training, planning the annual meeting, and gathering information for the annual report.

AGENCY RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

The draft report recommends that the EPA's Deputy Administrator direct the Scientific Integrity Committee to (1) develop and implement agencywide training on the *Scientific Integrity Policy* in a manner that will minimize delay in the EPA's adherence to policy requirements, (2) complete and issue an annual report on the status of scientific integrity in the agency before its first formal review of the policy, and (3) provide the Deputy Administrator with a written plan describing the actions and milestones for implementing and completing the training and issuing the annual report.

The draft report claims that the Scientific Integrity Committee's lack of progress in implementing the requirements of the Policy is resulting in the EPA being less equipped to provide leadership for the Agency on Scientific Integrity, promote compliance with the Policy, keep the Agency's senior leadership informed on and involved with the agencywide status of scientific integrity, and detect violations of scientific integrity.

Contrary to this claim, the Committee, comprised of senior management officials from across the agency, meets regularly to discuss elements of the Policy and enhance consistency across the Agency. These elements include development of a training module on the *Scientific Integrity Policy*, options for management certification of compliance with the policy, coordination procedures for the Scientific Integrity Official and the OIG, and the format for the annual meeting and annual report. By meeting regularly to discuss scientific integrity, the Committee provides a critical cross-agency resource for conveying information and providing leadership on the Policy. Further, the Deputy Administrator has provided guidance and is already directly engaged with the Scientific Integrity Policy's implementation.

The training module development, while important, cannot be used as a surrogate for demonstrating Policy implementation. In compliance with an earlier recommendation from the OIG to work with the unions in developing scientific integrity principles training ("Office of Research and Development Should Increase Awareness of Scientific Integrity Policies," Report No. 11-P-0386), over a period of several months the Committee diligently urged the unions to recruit volunteers to participate in training development.

In a letter from the unions dated last November 21, 2012, the unions acknowledge that the EPA reached out to them for their participation (Attachment 3). When no representatives were named, Mary Greene, Deputy Director of the Office of the Science Advisor, responded back to them on January 9, 2013, again requesting participation (Attachment 4.) Union representative names were finally provided on May 3, 2013, and the first full workgroup meeting has already taken place. At the same time, the Committee has continued to develop the training module on the Scientific Integrity Policy. As reported to the OIG on April 3, 2013, the Committee plans to finalize the scientific integrity training module by December 31, 2013 and make it available through Skillport. The Quick Reaction Report implies that no progress has been made on the training development action; this is simply not true.

In a memorandum to the Scientific Integrity Committee dated May 8, 2013, the Acting Administrator reiterated his commitment to scientific integrity and provided thoughts to the Committee on the organization of the annual meeting on scientific integrity and the content of the annual report. He requested that the Committee complete the annual report by the end of Fiscal Year 2013. A copy of his memorandum is found at Attachment 5. The Scientific Integrity Committee has reviewed an outline for the annual report on scientific integrity and, after receiving input at the upcoming annual meeting on June 25, plans to finalize the report by September 30, 2013.

The third recommendation, to provide the Deputy Administrator with a written plan for completing the training and issuing the annual report, is not needed as we have already outlined the path forward, and the Deputy Administrator has been briefed, provided input, and agreed with the plan presented to him.

As required by the EPA Order 2750, the agency's written response to a final report would address any recommendations that may be included at that time. We would consider any recommendations on their merits and, if applicable, provide a corrective action plan and/or offer alternative solutions to the report's recommendations.

I request that you withdraw the draft report at this time. In my view, an appropriate time to review the EPA's implementation of the Policy would be after the first annual report is issued and the first cycle of training is at least well underway, if not completed.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If your staff has any questions, please contact Martha Otto, Scientific Integrity Staff, Office of the Science Advisor, at (202) 564-2782 or otto.martha@epa.gov.

Attachments

cc: Bob Perciasepe, Acting Administrator

OIG Responses to Agency's Comments on Draft Quick Reaction Report

General Comments

"I have personally met with the Office of Inspector General management several times to develop coordination procedures on actions related to allegations of scientific misconduct and therefore I am surprised by the tone and method that is being used for this draft report."

> **OIG Response #1**: We understand those coordination procedures. However, those matters pertain to how our offices will coordinate when scientific misconduct allegations or scientific integrity allegations are received. Those coordination procedures do not apply to how OIG coordinates with agency counterparts when we conduct audits and evaluations of agency activities and programs. The manual that covers how we coordinate in those activities is EPA Manual 2750, for which the audit liaison is the point of contact. We believe the tone of our draft quick reaction report was balanced and fair.

"During our last meeting, I suggested that OIG attend the Agency's Scientific Integrity annual meeting scheduled for June 25. You have already received and accepted a formal invitation to this meeting."

> **OIG Response #2**: The agency's plans to hold a Scientific Integrity annual meeting was announced in a May 8 memo issued by the Acting EPA Administrator, which occurred after OIG staff started its work to issue the draft quick reaction report. While we did participate in that meeting, that type of meeting cannot be a substitute for conveying OIG findings on matters of scientific integrity or draft report findings that have not been through the OIG's quality assurance review process.

"Further, the hot line call mentioned in this report and the report's recommendations do not appear to me to have any connection with each other."

> **OIG Response #3**: The information on the hotline is provided solely for context. We received a hotline allegation that was not framed as a scientific integrity allegation. This other report is in draft and therefore we are limited in our ability to provide further details at this time.

Overall Comments

"The draft report demonstrates both a lack of clear understanding of the Policy and also any recognition of what has been done thus far to implement it at the Agency." The Quick Reaction

Report implies that no progress has been made on the training development action; this is simply not true."

> **OIG Response #4**: We have read the policy and understand it. Our findings are based on information we obtained from the (now former) interim scientific integrity official in early March 2013 and our review of the policy. The former interim scientific integrity official reviewed the draft quick reaction report and did not dispute the facts we reported.
>
> However, in response to our draft quick reaction report, the current interim scientific integrity official provided the OIG with new information on correctives actions and milestone dates regarding the agency' progress on the development and implementation of the training and annual reporting schedule. This information is included under the section entitled "Agency Response to Draft Quick Reaction Report and OIG Evaluation."

"I request that you withdraw the draft report at this time. In my view, an appropriate time to review the EPA's implementation of the Policy would be after the first annual report is issued and the first cycle of training is at least well underway, if not completed."

> **OIG Response #5**: The OIG does not plan to withdraw its report. Rather, as the standard OIG practice, when the agency provides new information in response to a draft OIG report, that information will be included in OIG's final report so that we are reporting the best available information we have. In this case, the information on corrective actions and milestones dates that the current interim scientific integrity chairman has reported in response to our report is included under the section entitled "Agency Response to Draft Quick Reaction Report and OIG Evaluation."

Technical Comments

"Page 3, in the first sentence of the first paragraph, the draft report states that, "In response, the agency agreed to make the Principles of Scientific Integrity E Training mandatory for scientific and technical staff and to update the course ... " In fact, the Office of Research and Development, not the agency, provided those responses to the OIG recommendations."

> **OIG Response #6**: The OIG checked the referenced audit report and confirmed this fact. The final report now states this action was taken by ORD.

"Page 4, in the first full paragraph, the draft report states that, "During our meeting with the interim scientific integrity official, he could not provide any projected milestone dates or timeframes for when the committee will complete this training requirement." This is factually incorrect. The interim scientific integrity official said that the Committee should finish the training this year."

OIG Response #7: The former interim scientific integrity official never stated to the OIG that the training would be completed in calendar year 2013. Rather, the former interim scientific integrity official stated that a timeline for completion of the training program was hard to determine (at the time of our March 2013 meeting) since the committee was still waiting to see how the union intended to participate. The former interim scientific integrity official reviewed OIG's draft quick reaction report and did not dispute the facts in it, including information obtained in interviews with the former official.

"Page 4, in the first full paragraph, the draft report states that, "On May l, 2013, according to the Audit Follow-up Coordinator for ORD and the agency's Management Audit Tracking System, the estimated completion date for the agencywide training on the February 2012 *Scientific Integrity Policy* has been revised to December 31, 2013. However, neither the audit follow-up coordinator nor the Management Audit Tracking System entry indicated whether the agency's Scientific Integrity Committee was involved in establishing the completion date for the agencywide training."The date approved by the Scientific Integrity Committee was coordinated with ORD's Audit Coordinator. This statement is factually incorrect and needs to be deleted."

OIG Response #8: We communicated with the audit follow-up coordinator and the coordinator did not state that the Scientific Integrity Committee established the December 2013 date for completion of the agencywide training. We also reviewed the Management Audit Tracking System records and found no evidence that the December 2013 date was coordinated through the Scientific Integrity Committee. However, based on the information provided by the current interim scientific integrity official in response to our draft quick reaction report, we note in this report that the date was coordinated and approved by the Scientific Integrity Committee. This reference is included under the first bullet of the section entitled "Agency Response to Draft Quick Reaction Report and OIG Evaluation."

"Page 4, in the second full paragraph, last sentence, the draft report says that, "The interim scientific integrity official stated that the committee would have to develop and implement training on the *Scientific lntegrity Policy* for the EPA's employees before they can complete the annual reporting requirement." This is factually incorrect."

"When asked whether the Committee had completed the annual report, the interim scientific integrity official replied that the Committee was discussing the format for the annual report. He did not state that the annual report would have to wait for training development."

OIG Response #9: The former interim scientific integrity official reviewed OIG's draft quick reaction report and did not dispute the facts in it, including information obtained in interviews with the former official.

Comments on Recommendations

We recommend that the EPA's Deputy Administrator direct the Scientific Integrity Committee to:

1. Develop and implement agencywide training on the *Scientific Integrity Policy* in a manner that will minimize further delay in the EPA's adherence to policy requirements.

Comment – "In a letter from the unions dated last November 21, 2012, the unions acknowledge that the EPA reached out to them for their participation (Attachment 3). When no representatives were named, the Deputy Director of the Office of the Science Advisor responded back to them on January 9, 2013, again requesting participation (Attachment4.) 'Union representative names were finally provided on May 3, 2013, and the first full workgroup meeting has already taken place. At the same time, the Committee has continued to develop the training module on the Scientific Integrity Policy. As reported to the OIG on April 3, 2013, the Committee plans to finalize the scientific integrity training module by December 31, 2013 and make it available through skill port."

OIG Response #10: Our findings are based on information we obtained from the (now former) interim scientific integrity official in early March 2013, during which we were not informed of the established date of December 31, 2013, for finalizing the scientific integrity training module. Nonetheless, the agency's comments in response to our draft quick reaction report are responsive to recommendation 1. The agency's reported actions include a plan and a date for corrective action. Therefore, the OIG considers this recommendation to be resolved.

2. Complete and issue an annual report on the status of scientific integrity in the EPA before its first formal review of the policy.

Comment – "In a memorandum to the Scientific Integrity Committee dated May 8, 2013, the Acting Administrator reiterated his commitment to scientific integrity and provided thoughts to the Committee on the organization of the annual meeting on scientific integrity and the content of the annual report. He requested that the Committee complete the annual report by the end of Fiscal Year 2013. A copy of his memorandum is found at Attachment 5. The Scientific Integrity Committee has reviewed an outline for the annual report on scientific integrity and, after receiving input at the upcoming annual meeting on June 25, plans to finalize the report by September 30, 2013."

OIG Response #11: The agency's comments are responsive to recommendation 2. The agency's reported actions include a plan and a date for corrective action. Therefore, the OIG considers this recommendation to be resolved.

3. Provide the Deputy Administrator with a written plan describing the action plan and milestones for implementing and completing the training and issuing the annual report.

Comment – "The third recommendation, to provide the Deputy Administrator with a written plan for completing the training and issuing the annual report, is not needed as we have already outlined the path forward, and the Deputy Administrator has been briefed, provided input, and agreed with the plan presented to him."

OIG Response #12: The agency's comments are responsive to recommendation 3. The agency's reported actions included a plan and a date for corrective action. Therefore, the OIG considers this corrective action to be completed and the recommendation to be closed.

Appendix C

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