

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

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. 45 , <i>Incentive Awards</i> , 5 CFR 451 , <i>Awards</i> , and Department of the Interior, Departmental Manual (DM), 370 DM 451.3 , <i>Honor Awards</i>
Approving Official:	Director, Policy and Administration (POLICY)
Contact:	Human Resources (HR) Policy and Programs Division (HRPPD), 84-58000

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 Department's Recommendation and Approval of Awards form, DI-451 before submitting an honor award citation. Appendices A, B, C, and D provide a template DI-451 for honor awards, outline the processes, provide instructions on formatting honor awards, and provide information for completing the signature blocks on the DI-451.
2. **Applicability.** This D&S applies to employees who submit an honor award nomination and directors, managers, and supervisors who sanction the nominations and citations to be sent to the Secretary, Assistant Secretary - 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 Secretary and requires a DI-451 for routing through the approval process.
 - B. **Citizen's Award for Exceptional Service.** Reclamation-specific award for private citizens or organizational partners, including volunteers. This award is approved by the Commissioner and requires a DI-451 for routing through the approval process.
 - C. **Derogatory Information.** For the purposes of this D&S, derogatory information is that which reflects unfavorably on the Department 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 electronic Official

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

Personnel File (eOPF), Civil Rights (CR)/Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) office records, or Office of the Inspector General (OIG) records. Examples of personnel-related derogatory 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, examples are not all-inclusive. Examples of OIG-related derogatory information include 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 recognizing 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 significant, long-term contributions to the Department's programs and missions. This award is approved by the Secretary and requires a DI-451 for routing through the approval process.
- 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. This award is approved by the Commissioner and requires a DI-451 for routing through the approval process.
- H. **Meritorious Service Award (MSA).** The second highest honor award presented to employees who have made exceptional continuing contributions to Department or Reclamation mission accomplishments. This award is approved by the Assistant Secretary - Water and Science and requires a DI-451 for routing through the approval process.
- I. **Outside Awards.** Award programs sponsored by external organizations. These awards require a DI-451 for routing through the approval process with the Commissioner and Assistant Secretary - Water and Science.
- J. **Reclamation Leadership Team (RLT).** Reclamation's Executive Schedule, Senior Executive Service, and Senior Level positions comprise the RLT.

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- K. **Reclamation Service Award.** 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. The letters of award are approved by the Commissioner and require a DI-451 for routing through the approval process.
 - L. **Retirement Recognition Award.** An award for retiring employees with more than 5 years of service with Reclamation. Eligible retirees 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.
 - M. **Superior Service Award (SSA).** 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. This award is approved by the Commissioner and requires a DI-451 for routing through the approval process.
 - N. **Unit Award for Excellence of Service.** For exceptional contribution(s) of employee groups, units, or teams. This award is approved by the Commissioner and requires a DI-451 for routing through the approval process.
 - O. **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 and requires a DI-451 for routing through the approval process.
4. **Responsibilities.**
- A. **Director, POLICY.** The Director, POLICY is responsible for reviewing the content of all citations other than those in Paragraph 4.G., prior to final approval of honor award nominations. Concurrence will be noted on the surnamed copy of the citation and by signing as *Reviewing Official* on the DI-451 before forwarding to the Commissioner for final approval.
 - B. **RLT.** The RLT is responsible for:
 - (1) identifying and soliciting nominations throughout their organization for specific award ceremonies (e.g., Reclamation managers meeting);
 - (2) ensuring that the citation meets Departmental and Reclamation honor award regulations, guidelines, and criteria;
 - (3) validating the eligibility of the nominee receiving an honor award, (e.g., manager is not aware of any potential derogatory information), which must be noted on the DI-451 in the “Justification” section; and

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- (4) concurring and agreeing to all information in the honor award citation by surmaming a copy of the citation and signing as the *Reviewing Official* on the DI-451.

C. 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 (e.g., manager or supervisor is not aware of any potential derogatory information);
- (3) validating the honor award citation contains the descriptive information necessary to endorse the nomination (see criteria in Paragraphs 5.A. through C.); and
- (4) concurring and agreeing to all information in the honor award citation by surmaming a copy of the citation and signing as the *Recommending Individual* on the DI-451.

D. Reclamation's HR Awards Coordinator. Upon receipt of the nomination and the original DI-451, Reclamation's HR awards coordinator is responsible for:

- (1) ensuring the submitting servicing HR office reviewed the nominee's eOPF for any derogatory information. This review is certified on the DI-451 in the "Justification" by stating: "the eOPF was reviewed and no derogatory information was found", and includes the initials of the reviewer;
- (2) initiating review of employee records with Reclamation's CRD, the Department's Office of Civil Rights (DOCR), 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 the citation meets Departmental and Reclamation honor award regulations, guidelines, and criteria. Reclamation's HR awards coordinator with oversight by the Manager, HRPPD, reviews the citation again for substantive content, grammar, and proper formatting (see Paragraphs 5.A. through C. and 6.A. through F.). If the criteria are not met, the award package is returned to the submitting servicing HR office for revision;

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- (4) verifying that the surnamed copy of the citation is approved by the nominator, nominees' manager and/or supervisor, and the appropriate director; and
- (5) routing all honor awards to the Director, POLICY for review, after Paragraphs 4.B.(1) through (4) have been satisfactorily completed.

E. Reclamation's Civil Rights Division (CRD) Manager. Reclamation's CRD manager is responsible for:

- (1) reviewing and revising the briefing paper, as appropriate, and forwarding to the Commissioner as described in Paragraphs 4.G.(3) and (4); and
- (2) documenting the Commissioner's decision on the DI-451, as described in Paragraph 4.G.(4).

F. Servicing HR Office Awards Coordinators. Servicing HR office awards coordinators are responsible for:

- (1) initiating review of nominee's eOPF for derogatory information. This review is certified on the DI-451 in the "Justification" by stating: "the eOPF was reviewed and no derogatory information was found", and includes the initials of the reviewer;
- (2) initiating review of employee records with the 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 the citation meets Departmental and Reclamation award regulations and criteria. The awards coordinator with oversight by the servicing HR officer reviews the citation for substantive content, correct grammar, and format (see Paragraphs 5.A. through C. and 6.A. through F.). If criteria are not met, the award citation is returned to the author for revision;
- (4) verifying that the surnamed copy of the citation is approved by the nominator, nominees' manager and/or supervisor, and the appropriate director; and
- (5) routing all honor awards to Reclamation's HR awards coordinator.

G. 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 and/or conferring with the appropriate EEO office(s) ensuring review of all relevant records for the past 5 years, to determine whether:

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- (a) the nominee has been the named individual responsible for discrimination in a complaint in which the Department, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), or Federal district court has issued a Finding of Discrimination (proceed to Paragraph 4.G.(2)(b));
 - (b) the nominee has not been the named individual responsible for discrimination in a complaint (proceed to Paragraph 4.G.(2)(a)); or
 - (c) the nominee has been or currently is the named individual responsible for an ongoing or series of ongoing discrimination complaint(s) or administrative inquiry(ies) (proceed to Paragraph 4.G.(3)).
- (2) recommending approval or disapproval of honor award nominations, after reviewing records for the past 5 years as described in paragraph 4.G.(1) by:
- (a) 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 any EEO complaint(s) or administrative inquiry(ies), or
 - (b) disapproving 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 demonstrates the nominee has been the named individual responsible for discrimination in a complaint or complaints in which the Department, the EEOC, or a Federal district court has issued a Finding of Discrimination within the past 5 years.
- (3) developing a briefing paper, if the nominee meets the information described in Paragraph 4.G.(1)(c), for the approving official detailing relevant information for 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

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

management practices, and the contents of the Departmental or EEOC decisions or communications regarding the complaints.

- (4) providing the briefing paper as outlined in Paragraph 4.G.(3) in a sealed envelope, to the director of the organization the nominee resides in. If the director agrees with the statement of non-concurrence, the director will send an email to Reclamation's HR Awards Coordinator and the servicing CR/EEO officer with their agreement of non-concurrence. If the director decides to forward the nomination in spite of a statement of non-concurrence by the servicing CR/EEO specialist or officer, the servicing CR/EEO specialist or officer will forward the briefing paper to Reclamation's CRD manager, who will review and revise the paper as appropriate and forward it in a sealed envelope to the Commissioner as the final approving official. Reclamation's CRD manager will document the Commissioner's decision on the DI-451.

H. Employees. Employees are responsible for:

- (1) initiating honor award nominations by completing the DI-451 (see Appendix A). The DI-451 must go through the proper review and approval process (e.g., submitted through supervisory channels to the appropriate director and servicing HR and CR/EEO offices for review) (see Appendix B); and
- (2) submitting the citation through supervisory channels after receiving confirmation from the servicing HR office awards coordinator that the DI-451 has been approved.

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 nominees' contributions exemplify the highest standards and dedication to public service and significantly benefit 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:

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- (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;
- (3) performance of assigned duties in such an outstanding manner and with such identifiable benefits, 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

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

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.

6. Requirements, Formatting, and Processing for all Honor Award Nominations.

- A. Any employee may recommend another employee for an honor award by completing and submitting a DI-451 to the nominee's supervisor for concurrence and transmittal through their servicing HR office awards coordinator to the approving official.
- B. Before final approval of an honor award, the servicing HR and CR/EEO offices must ensure that there is no derogatory information in the nominee's eOPF and in any respective office records. Potential derogatory information includes issues such as discriminatory actions, garnishment orders, suitability, security findings, etc.
- C. Reclamation's awards coordinator must confirm with Reclamation's CRD, the DOCR, and the OIG, whether or not the nominee has been involved in any prior, or is currently involved in any 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 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, Appendix C for formatting instructions, and Appendix D for information on proper signature block approvals.

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