

# Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

## **TEMPORARY RELEASE**

*(Expires 09/30/2026)*

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<b>Subject:</b>	Direct Hire Authority for Resource Assistant Internship Program
<b>Purpose:</b>	This Directive and Standard (D&S) provides Bureau of Reclamation implementation instructions in the use of the Direct Hire Authority for Resource Assistant Internship (DHA-RAI) Program. Use of this direct hire appointing authority will provide Reclamation substantial flexibility in hiring qualified former Resource Assistant Internship (RAI) interns, offer an additional opportunity for supervisors to attract and recruit a new generation of workers, and open an avenue for improving diversity and inclusion within Reclamation.
<b>Authority:</b>	The Public Lands Corps Act of 1993; Public Law (PL) 112-74, Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012, 125 STAT. 1012-1013; (2) 16 USC Sec. 1721-1728; John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act; PL 116-9; and Department of the Interior, Personnel Bulletin (PB) No. 21-08, <i>Direct Hire Authority for Resource Assistant Internship Programs</i> , dated November 5, 2021.
<b>Approving Official:</b>	Deputy Commissioner – Policy, Administration and Budget (PAB)
<b>Contact:</b>	Human Resources Division, Human Resources Policy Office (84-12100)

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### **1. Introduction.**

The DHA-RAI Program is a hiring authority for the Department of the Interior (Department) bureaus, to directly appoint former RAI interns to any permanent competitive service position, undergraduate and graduate students who have successfully completed an 11-week rigorous internship with a Department bureau and ***subsequently*** (i.e., after completion of the internship) earned their undergraduate or graduate degree. Former RAI interns may be appointed to any competitive service position for which they qualify in accordance with PB No. 21-08, and without regard to veterans' preference and competitive rating and ranking. Diversity and Inclusion Specialists will assist supervisors with the recruitment of interns, to help ensure the representation of diverse student populations.

### **2. Applicability.**

This D&S applies to all Reclamation managers, supervisors, and hiring or selecting officials in hiring qualified former RAI interns in accordance with the Department policies and procedures.

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### 3. Requirements.

#### A. **Internship Career Fields.**

See 16 USC 1725 and [PB No. 21-08](#) for applicable career fields.

#### B. **RAI Program Criteria.**

See PB No. 21-08 for program criteria.

#### C. **Solicitation of Proposals.**

Reclamation's DHA-RAI Program Coordinator, designated by the Supervisor, HRPO, who administers the DHA-RAI Program, will prepare an annual fiscal year (FY) call each November-December for rigorous internship project proposals.

#### D. **Submitting a Proposal.**

To participate in the DHA-RAI Program, supervisors must develop and submit DHA-RAI rigorous internship project proposals to the Reclamation DHA-RAI Program Coordinator, for approval, during the annual call for project proposals. Supervisors should contact their servicing HR office for information on submitting DHA-RAI proposals. DHA-RAI proposals must contain sufficient detail to demonstrate the project(s) meets the requirements of a rigorous internship as described in PB No. 21-08, Section 4(b). The *Reclamation Resource Assistant Internship Project Proposal Template* (Appendix A) must be used to submit DHA-RAI project proposals.

#### E. **Review and Approval of Project Proposals.**

Internship project proposals will be evaluated by the review board, annually, which is led by the Reclamation's DHA-RAI Program Coordinator. The Supervisor, HRPO, oversees the review board which is comprised of the DHA-RAI Program Coordinator, the Reclamation Learning Officer, a Diversity and Inclusion specialist, and appropriate subject matter experts.

- (1) The review board will evaluate DHA-RAI project proposals using the criteria in Paragraph 3.B., ensuring the recommended project proposals meet the rigorous internship criteria about relevant career fields and whether the project proposal(s) can be completed in the specified timeframe.
- (2) Upon completion of the project proposal review, Reclamation's DHA-RAI Program Coordinator will inform supervisors of their proposal's approval or disapproval for the DHA-RAI Program and maintain a file the approved DHA-RAI project proposal. A post project approval meeting with Reclamation's DHA-RAI Program Coordinator, a grants management specialist from the

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Mission Support Organization's Acquisition and Assistance Management Division (AAMD), and the project supervisor(s) will be conducted to discuss program procedures for partner and intern selections. The grants management specialist will work with the supervisor to initiate task agreement requests and will be responsible for processing task agreement requests for partner and intern selection; and monitoring the conditions of the task agreements to ensure partner and intern selection meet all requirements contained in the task agreements.

### **F. Selecting a Partner.**

- (1) Nonprofit partner organizations must be used to recruit qualified interns for internships at Reclamation. A nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization, but does not include institutions of higher education that:
  - (a) operate primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest;
  - (b) are organized primarily for profit; and
  - (c) use net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operations of the organization.
- (2) AAMD will provide a listing of approved nonprofit partner organizations. These organizations will have already been awarded a Master Cooperative Agreement (MCA) and are able to provide interns to Reclamation without further competition. Selecting from these nonprofit partner organizations with an MCA in place will expedite the financial assistance process. The nonprofit partner organization selected for a rigorous internship provides the RAI intern with a stipend, paid by the supervisor, reimburses them for appropriate expenses, and ensures that all RAI interns provided meet the program eligibility requirements. They will also ensure outreach to diverse students and women and encourage outreach to individuals with a disability.
- (3) In unique circumstances, if the nonprofit partner organizations with an MCA in place cannot serve the geographic needs and desired qualifications for the RAI intern, the supervisors may prefer to partner with a different nonprofit organization. In this case, the supervisor must work with Reclamation's Denver Financial Assistance Support Services Office to accomplish the necessary steps to enter into a cooperative agreement with the preferred

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nonprofit partner organization, who will also ensure the agreements are appropriate to address the needs and requirements of Reclamation and the nonprofit partner organization. Once a nonprofit partner organization with an MCA is selected, a task agreement is developed between the supervisor and the partner that details the duties the RAI interns will perform.

- (4) RAI interns are recruited by the partner organization. Supervisors may be involved in the selection process or allow the partner to select eligible students. While they are participating in the RAI Program, RAI interns are employees of the partner organization. The partner will administer payroll for the intern (a stipend) and will disburse any other authorized expenses.

### **G. RAI Intern Selection.**

Interns will be selected by the supervisors. All interns must be at least 17 years of age and enrolled in an accredited institution of higher education. The RAI intern must work an 11-week, full-time summer (typically May through September) rigorous internship. Approved internships will provide work that gives the RAI intern an opportunity to demonstrate they possess the work qualities and communication skills necessary for success in the Federal Government. After they have successfully completed the internship and subsequently earn their undergraduate or graduate degree (see Paragraph 4.D. for definitions), they may be appointed into permanent Federal positions in the competitive service for which they are qualified. Interns have 2 years from the date they completed their undergraduate or graduate degree to be hired using this authority. The 2-year time period cannot be extended.

### **H. RAI Intern In-processing and Orientation.**

Selected interns will be required to obtain and maintain the appropriate security clearance and access necessary to perform the duties and responsibilities for their internship position. As employees of the non-Federal partner, they must also adhere to in-processing procedures used to on-board volunteers, to include the completion of an [OF-301, Volunteer Application for Natural Resources Agencies](#) as applicable. Supervisors are responsible for overseeing the in-processing of the interns and must work together with their servicing security office and/or HR office to determine the appropriate in-processing procedures, as well as what level of access and background investigation the intern will need. The intern may be required to attend introductory training courses, orientation classes, or other training courses or classes specific to the work they will accomplish in their assigned project.

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**I. Participant Verification Form.**

All RAI interns participating in the RAI Program must complete a participant verification form within the first week of their internship. The form is initiated and signed by the intern's supervisor and is reviewed and signed by the intern. A template provided in Appendix B must be used for this purpose or a local form may be used providing the form includes all of the information contained in the Appendix B template.

**J. Program Certification.**

Supervisors must complete weekly performance evaluations, as well as a mid and final internship performance review for each RAI intern. The interns will be evaluated on measurable objectives, determined by the supervisor and documented within a RAI Development and Evaluation Plan, and outcomes related to their specific work assignments, as well as their performance in applying competencies such as problem solving, leadership, strategic thinking, and oral/written communication skills, etc.

- (1) Appendix C provides supervisors with a Reclamation Template for Resource Assistant Internship Development and Evaluation Plan (Development and Evaluation Plan) to monitor and evaluate intern performance. A local form may be used for this purpose providing it includes all the information contained in the Appendix C template. The Development and Evaluation Plan template also includes an area for supervisors to conduct an overall evaluation of each intern's project performance and to prepare a final evaluation to communicate to the intern.
- (2) Additionally, supervisors shall indicate on the Development and Evaluation Plan template (or local form, as applicable) whether or not the intern has successfully completed the internship and submit the following documents to the RAI Program Coordinator at the end of the internship:
  - (a) a copy of the evaluation form (or other acceptable local form) with the intern's final evaluation; and
  - (b) an unofficial copy of the intern's college transcripts.
- (3) All RAI interns who successfully completed performance expectations and the 11 weeks of the rigorous internship will receive an official program completion certificate signed by the Supervisor, HRPO, documenting eligibility for the DHA-RAI hiring authority.

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**K. Eligibility for Competitive Appointment.**

Former RAI interns may be hired as a permanent career-conditional Federal civilian employee to any competitive service position using the DHA-RAI authority.

Supervisors are responsible for contacting the servicing HR office to hire a former RAI intern who has successfully completed a rigorous internship and subsequently earned their undergraduate or graduate degree. Reclamation may use the DHA-RAI to appoint a former RAI intern to a permanent competitive service position when the former RAI:

- (1) reaches or exceeds the minimum age requirement of 17 years of age;
- (2) successfully completes a rigorous summer internship with a Department bureau;
- (3) subsequently completes an undergraduate or graduate degree program from an accredited institution of higher education;
- (4) meets Office of Personnel Management (OPM) qualifications requirements and any additional selective placement factor(s) for the position to which they will be appointed (unofficial transcripts and/or a letter from the accredited college or university, on letterhead, verifying the intern's degree completion and graduation date) may be submitted to verify qualifications, but official college transcripts are required at the time of appointment); and
- (5) meets all appointment eligibility requirements (e.g., Selective Service Registration, suitability for Federal employment).

**L. DHA Career-Conditional Appointment.**

Supervisors will coordinate the permanent appointment of the former RAI intern with their servicing HR office. The servicing HR office will assist supervisors in obtaining all appointment request documents from the intern as contained in Paragraph 3.M., *Approval and Appointment Request Package* and in ensuring any other hiring controls have been met. Servicing HR office must also adhere to CTAP/ICTAP regulations to identify any potential surplus or displaced agency and interagency employees. The servicing HR office must verify the former RAI intern's completion of RAI Program requirements, determine that they meet the OPM qualification requirements, and ensure the former RAI intern meets all eligibility requirements for placement into the position.

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**M. Approval and Appointment Request Package.**

After the selection has been made, supervisors must request approval to appoint the former RAI intern, who have completed all program requirements, to a permanent competitive service position in Reclamation. All requests to appoint a former RAI intern will be submitted via the Data Tracking System (DTS), through the servicing HR officer, through the DHA-RAI Program Coordinator, to the Supervisor, HRPO for review in meeting the DHA-RAI Program requirements. Servicing HR offices are responsible for collecting and submitting all DHA-RAI program documents to the DHA-RAI Program Coordinator. The Reclamation Human Capital Officer (HCO) is responsible for approval or disapproval of the appointment. The DHA-RAI Program Coordinator will be responsible for returning DHA-RAI Program documents to the servicing HR office upon approval/disapproval from the HCO. A sample Approval and Appointment Request Memorandum is provided in Appendix D.

- (1) All approval and appointment request packages must include:
  - (a) memorandum requesting authority to appoint a former RAI intern using the DHA-RAI, including approval and disapproval signature blocks for the HCO (see Appendix D);
  - (b) the intern's resume, OF-306, Declaration for Federal Appointment, and an official copy of college transcripts noting the degree conferred and the graduation date. (Note: unofficial transcripts and a letter from the accredited college or university, on letterhead, verifying the intern's degree completion and graduation date may be submitted in lieu of official college transcripts; however, official college transcripts must be submitted to the servicing HR office prior to the time of appointment);
  - (c) a classified position description;
  - (d) a copy of the CTAP/ICTAP vacancy announcement;
  - (e) documentation of clearance of priority selection candidates (i.e., printout of applicable priority selection lists);
  - (f) RAI approved internship project proposal;
  - (g) a completed Reclamation RAI Participant Verification Form (or other acceptable form, see Appendix B);

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- (h) a completed Reclamation RAI Development and Evaluation Plan (or other acceptable form, see Appendix C); and
  - (i) a Certificate of Completion for the RAI Program signed and dated by an appropriate approving official.
- (2) The former RAI's time satisfactorily serving in a RAI summer rigorous internship Program may be considered creditable experience in meeting OPM qualification requirements for Federal employment. However, the RAI time is not creditable for retirement, time in grade, leave, or thrift savings plan service computation, nor does it count towards fulfilling a probationary period or for obtaining tenure with the Federal government. The legal authorities used to appoint the former RAI interns are:
- (a) first legal authority: AYM; and
  - (b) second legal authority: ZLM (Public Law 116-9).

**N. DHA-RAI Eligibility Period.**

Former RAI interns who have successfully completed their 11-week continuous, full-time RAI internships are eligible to be hired to permanent, competitive service positions, within 2 years from the date the RAI completed their undergraduate or graduate degree. This 2-year time period cannot be extended.

#### **4. Definitions.**

**A. DHA-RAI Program.**

The DHA-RAI Program is a hiring authority for Department bureaus, to directly appoint to any permanent competitive service position, undergraduate and graduate students who have completed an 11-week rigorous internship and subsequently earned their undergraduate or graduate degree.

**B. Noncompetitive Hiring Status.**

Under the DHA-RAI Reclamation may appoint a candidate(s) to a career-conditional appointment without competition under competitive examination or competing with career and career-conditional employees under internal merit staffing procedures for any position(s) for which they are eligible in a Department bureau. Veteran's preference does not apply. Candidates applying under this authority will be considered with other noncompetitive candidates.



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**C. Nonprofit Organization.**

Any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization, but does not include institutions of higher education that: operate primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; are organized primarily for profit; and use net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operations of the organization.

**D. Student.**

An individual who is enrolled or accepted for enrollment as seeking an undergraduate or graduate degree in a qualifying educational institution on a full or part-time basis (as determined by the institution based on the number of credits in which the student is enrolled). Associate degrees and graduate certificates are not qualifying for the DHA-RAI Program.