

Atmospheric Administration: Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service.

II. Basis for Project Plan Modification

There are two types of ratings of record that may be assigned to employees within the DoC Demonstration Project: *eligible* and *unsatisfactory*. *Eligible* is a rating indicating an acceptable level of performance. *Unsatisfactory* is a rating indicating an unacceptable level of performance.

Currently the demonstration project provides additional service retention credit only to those employees with a rating of record of *eligible* and whose overall performance score ranks within the top 30 percent of all scores within their pay pool. These employees are credited with 10 years of additional service retention credit in the event of a reduction-in-force. The total additional service retention credit that may be awarded to an employee is based on each of the employee's three most recent annual performance scores received during the 4-year period immediately prior to an established cutoff date. The potential additional service retention credit, therefore, totals 30 years. No additional service retention credit is awarded to employees who have not received a score in the top 30 percent of their pay pool. In accordance with the demonstration project, DoC also does not provide any performance-related retention credit to employees who are hired or transfer into the demonstration project from any other performance appraisal system.

Project evaluations and comments received from employees and employee groups (e.g., unions) indicate that the current policy of limiting additional service retention credit to employees within the top 30 percent of all scores in their pay pool is unfairly weighted against other employees who have achieved an acceptable level of performance but who did not score within the top 30 percent.

To address this issue, the DoC Departmental Personnel Management Board (DPMB) has approved a modification to the project plan to provide additional service retention credit to all employees rated *eligible* within the demonstration project, even if their scores do not fall within the top 30 percent of their pay pool. All employees rated *eligible*, other than the top 30 percent, will be awarded an additional 5 years of service retention credit for each *eligible* rating of record in the event of a reduction-in-force. The

total additional service retention credit that may be awarded to an employee is based on each of the employee's three most recent annual performance scores received during the 4-year period immediately prior to an established cutoff date.

The Department of Commerce plans to expand the demonstration project to include other organizations within the Department. Various officials expressed concern that the current policy places new employees at a disadvantage because no prior performance-related retention credit is permitted. In response to these concerns, the DPMB approved a new policy of awarding performance-related retention credit for Federal employees who are hired or transfer into the demonstration project.

III. Changes to the Project Plan

The following discussion refers readers to the substantive changes to the project plan. The referenced page number refers to the page in the final plan, published in the **Federal Register** on December 24, 1997, and the notice of modification to that plan published in the **Federal Register** on September 30, 1999.

Page 67451. Replace Paragraph C.3 "Link between Performance and Retention" in its entirety as follows: An employee rated *eligible* with an overall performance score within the top 30 percent of scores within a pay pool (See Performance Evaluation and Rewards) will be credited with 10 additional years of service for retention credit. An employee rated *eligible* with an overall performance score that does not fall within the top 30 percent of scores within a pay pool will be credited with 5 additional years of service for retention credit. The total credit will be based on the employee's three most recent annual performance scores received during the 4-year period prior to an established cutoff date.

Employees who convert to this system from any other performance appraisal system within the Federal Government will receive 5 additional years of service for retention credit for each performance rating of record equivalent to an *eligible* rating in the demonstration project. Just as with other employees in the project, the total credit will be based on the employee's three most recent annual performance scores received during the 4-year period prior to an established cutoff date. Career status and veteran preference will continue to have the same effect on retention standing as they now have under current regulations.

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SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

[Declaration of Disaster #P013]

State of North Dakota

As a result of the President's major disaster declaration for Public Assistance on August 1, 2003, the U.S. Small Business Administration is activating its disaster loan program only for private non-profit organizations that provide essential services of a governmental nature. I find that Barnes County in the State of North Dakota constitutes a disaster area due to damages caused by severe storms and high winds occurring on June 24 and June 25, 2003. Applications for loans for physical damage as a result of this disaster may be filed until the close of business on September 30, 2003 at the address listed below or other locally announced locations: Small Business Administration, Disaster Area 3 Office, 14925 Kingsport Rd., Ft. Worth, TX 76155-2243.

The interest rates are:

	Per- cent
<i>For Physical Damage:</i>	
Non-Profit Organizations Without Credit Available Elsewhere	2.953
Non-Profit Organizations With Credit Available Elsewhere	5.500

The number assigned to this disaster for physical damage is P01311.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Nos. 59008).

Dated: August 6, 2003.

Cheri L. Cannon,

Acting Associate Administrator for Disaster Assistance.

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SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

[Declaration of Disaster #3528, Amdt. 3]

State of Ohio

In accordance with the notice received from the Department of Homeland Security—Federal Emergency Management Agency, effective August 4, 2003, the above numbered declaration is hereby amended to include Columbiana and Mahoning Counties as disaster areas due to damages caused by severe storms and flooding occurring on July 4, 2003, and continuing through July 11, 2003.

In addition, applications for economic injury loans from small businesses located in the contiguous counties of Carroll, Jefferson, Portage, Stark, and