

and Atmospheric Administration Weather Ready All Hazards Award Program. This award program shall provide annual awards to honor individuals or organizations that use or provide National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio All Hazards receivers or transmitters to save lives and protect property. Individuals or organizations that utilize other early warning tools or applications also qualify for this award.

**(b) Goal**

This award program draws attention to the life-saving work of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Ready All Hazards Program, as well as emerging tools and applications, that provide real-time warning to individuals and communities of severe weather or other hazardous conditions.

**(c) Program elements**

**(1) Nominations**

Nominations for this award shall be made annually by the Weather Field Offices to the Director of the National Weather Service. Broadcast meteorologists, weather radio manufacturers and weather warning tool and application developers, emergency managers, and public safety officials may nominate individuals or organizations to their local Weather Field Offices, but the final list of award nominees must come from the Weather Field Offices.

**(2) Selection of awardees**

Annually, the Director of the National Weather Service shall choose winners of this award whose timely actions, based on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio All Hazards receivers or transmitters or other early warning tools and applications, saved lives or property, or demonstrated public service in support of weather or all hazard warnings.

**(3) Award ceremony**

The Director of the National Weather Service shall establish a means of making these awards to provide maximum public awareness of the importance of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio, and such other warning tools and applications as are represented in the awards.

(Pub. L. 115–25, title IV, §407, Apr. 18, 2017, 131 Stat. 111.)

**§ 8547. Report on contract positions at National Weather Service**

**(a) Report required**

Not later than 180 days after April 18, 2017, the Under Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the use of contractors at the National Weather Service for the most recently completed fiscal year.

**(b) Contents**

The report required by subsection (a) shall include, with respect to the most recently completed fiscal year, the following:

(1) The total number of full-time equivalent employees at the National Weather Service,

disaggregated by each equivalent level of the General Schedule.

(2) The total number of full-time equivalent contractors at the National Weather Service, disaggregated by each equivalent level of the General Schedule that most closely approximates their duties.

(3) The total number of vacant positions at the National Weather Service on the day before April 18, 2017, disaggregated by each equivalent level of the General Schedule.

(4) The five most common positions filled by full-time equivalent contractors at the National Weather Service and the equivalent level of the General Schedule that most closely approximates the duties of such positions.

(5) Of the positions identified under paragraph (4), the percentage of full-time equivalent contractors in those positions that have held a prior position at the National Weather Service or another entity in National<sup>1</sup> Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

(6) The average full-time equivalent salary for Federal employees at the National Weather Service for each equivalent level of the General Schedule.

(7) The average salary for full-time equivalent contractors performing at each equivalent level of the General Schedule at the National Weather Service.

(8) A description of any actions taken by the Under Secretary to respond to the issues raised by the Inspector General of the Department of Commerce regarding the hiring of former National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration employees as contractors at the National Weather Service such as the issues raised in the Investigative Report dated June 2, 2015 (OIG–12–0447).

**(c) Annual publication**

For each fiscal year after the fiscal year covered by the report required by subsection (a), the Under Secretary shall, not later than 180 days after the completion of the fiscal year, publish on a publicly accessible Internet website the information described in paragraphs (1) through (8) of subsection (b) for such fiscal year.

(Pub. L. 115–25, title IV, §410, Apr. 18, 2017, 131 Stat. 112.)

**Editorial Notes**

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The General Schedule, referred to in subsec. (b), is set out under section 5332 of Title 5, Government Organization and Employees.

**§ 8548. Weather enterprise outreach**

**(a) In general**

The Under Secretary may establish mechanisms for outreach to the weather enterprise—

(1) to assess the weather forecasts and forecast products provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and

(2) to determine the highest priority weather forecast needs of the community described in subsection (b).

<sup>1</sup> So in original. Probably should be preceded by “the”.

**(b) Outreach community**

In conducting outreach under subsection (a), the Under Secretary shall contact leading experts and innovators from relevant stakeholders, including the representatives from the following:

- (1) State or local emergency management agencies.
- (2) State agriculture agencies.
- (3) Indian tribes (as defined in section 5304 of title 25) and Native Hawaiians (as defined in section 7517 of title 20).
- (4) The private aerospace industry.
- (5) The private earth observing industry.
- (6) The operational forecasting community.
- (7) The academic community.
- (8) Professional societies that focus on meteorology.
- (9) Such other stakeholder groups as the Under Secretary considers appropriate.

(Pub. L. 115-25, title IV, §412, Apr. 18, 2017, 131 Stat. 113.)

**§ 8549. Hurricane hunter aircraft****(a) Backup capability**

The Under Secretary shall acquire backup for the capabilities of the WP-3D Orion and G-IV hurricane aircraft of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that is sufficient to prevent a single point of failure.

**(b) Authority to enter agreements**

In order to carry out subsection (a), the Under Secretary shall negotiate and enter into 1 or more agreements or contracts, to the extent practicable and necessary, with governmental and non-governmental entities.

**(c) Future technology**

The Under Secretary shall continue the development of Airborne Phased Array Radar under the United States Weather Research Program.

**(d) Authorization of appropriations**

For each of fiscal years 2017 through 2020, support for implementing subsections (a) and (b) is authorized out of funds appropriated to the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations.

(Pub. L. 115-25, title IV, §413, Apr. 18, 2017, 131 Stat. 114.)

**§ 8550. Improvements to Cooperative Observer Program of National Weather Service****(a) In general**

The Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, acting through the National Weather Service, shall improve the Cooperative Observer Program by—

- (1) providing support to—
  - (A) State-coordinated programs relating to the Program; and
  - (B) States and regions where observations provided through the Program are scarce;
- (2) working with State weather service headquarters to increase participation in the Program and to add stations in States and regions described in paragraph (1)(B);
- (3) where feasible, ensuring that data streams from stations that have been contrib-

uting data to the Program for more than 50 years are maintained and continually staffed by volunteers;

(4) prioritizing the recruitment of new volunteers for the Program;

(5) ensuring that opportunities exist for automated reporting to lessen the burden on volunteers to collect and report data by hand; and

(6) ensuring that integrated reporting is available for qualitative observations that cannot be automated, such as drought conditions, snow observations, and hazardous weather events, to ensure that volunteers in the Program can report and upload observations quickly and easily.

**(b) Coordination with States and regions**

Not less frequently than every 180 days, the National Weather Service shall coordinate with State and regional offices with respect to the status of Cooperative Observer Program stations.

**(c) Coordination with Federal agencies**

The National Weather Service shall coordinate with other Federal agencies, including the Forest Service, the Department of Agriculture, and the United States Geological Survey, to leverage opportunities to grow the Cooperative Observer Program network and to more effectively use existing infrastructure, weather stations, and staff of the Program.

(Pub. L. 115-423, §8, Jan. 7, 2019, 132 Stat. 5461.)

**Editorial Notes****CODIFICATION**

This section was enacted as part of the National Integrated Drought Information System Reauthorization Act of 2018, and not as part of the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 which comprises this chapter.

**SUBCHAPTER IV—IMPROVING FEDERAL PRECIPITATION INFORMATION****§ 8561. Study on precipitation estimation****(a) In general**

Not later than 90 days after December 16, 2022, the Administrator, in consultation with other Federal agencies as appropriate, shall seek to enter an agreement with the National Academies—

(1) to conduct a study on the state of practice and research needs for precipitation estimation, including probable maximum precipitation estimation; and

(2) to submit, not later than 24 months after the date on which such agreement is finalized, to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate, and make publicly available on a website, a report on the results of the study under paragraph (1).

**(b) Study**

The report under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) An examination of the current state of practice for precipitation estimation at scales