

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).

**(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 contributing 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.)