




# United States Department of the Interior


U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
Office of the Director  
Reston, Virginia 20192

Memorandum

**AUG 02 2017**

To: Mary L. Kendall  
Deputy Inspector General

Through: Andrea Travnicek   
Acting Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

From: William H. Werkheiser   
Acting Director

Subject: Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Draft Evaluation Report - Evaluation of USGS Scientific Collection Management Policy, Report No. 2016-ER-057

In the subject report, dated June 2017, the OIG of the Department of the Interior (DOI) reviewed the current policies of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) for managing its scientific collections. The OIG found that the USGS scientific collection management policies are not consistent with DOI policies as defined in the Department Manual (DM) and are not comparable to policies of two other bureaus--the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). In addition, the OIG found that the USGS did not have a final policy on the management of its biologic specimens, which meant the OIG could not review such policy for consistency with the DM.

**OIG Recommendation:** Reconcile and justify current and future scientific collection policies with the requirements of the Departmental Manual.

**Response:** It is the perspective of the USGS that its scientific collection policy is in alignment with the Departmental Manual requirements for working scientific collections. Specifically, it aligns with the DM Part 411, Chapter 3, Section 1b, which provides the following language: "Non-Museum Property – Working Collections. A bureau may decide that working scientific collections will not be managed as museum property."

The USGS policy applies to the management of scientific collections. By contrast, the NPS and FWS policies apply to the management of museum collections. The language used to describe USGS scientific collections is well aligned with that of other science agencies, such as NASA (NASA Policy Directive, NPD 7100.10F) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) (USDA ARS Scientific Collections Management and Access Policy September 2014).

The USGS scientific collections policy employs terminology promulgated by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and the National Science and Technology Council Interagency Working Group for Scientific Collections (IWGSC), in accordance with U.S Code, Title 42, Chapter 79, Subchapter II, Section 6624, the OSTP Memorandum of March 20, 2014: Improving the Management of and Access to Scientific Collections, and the IWGSC report: Scientific Collections: Mission-Critical Infrastructure for Federal Science Agencies.

By the Sundry Civil Act of March 3, 1879 [20 USC § 59], Congress explicitly separated the scientific investigation functions of “the Ocean Survey, the Geological Survey, or any other parties of the Government” from museum functions that it mandated to the National Museum [of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution]. “All collections of rocks, minerals, fossils, and objects of natural history, archaeology and ethnology, made by the National Ocean Survey, the United States Geological Survey, or by any other parties of the Government of the United States, when no longer needed for investigation in progress shall be deposited in the National Museum.”

**USGS Policy:**

The USGS is in the process of developing policy that will apply to all scientific collections, which will be constituted as a USGS Survey Manual Chapter. The policy will continue to align with the DM Part 411. Chapter 3, Section 1b. The USGS will also develop implementation guidelines and procedures that will apply to all scientific collections including biological collections.

**Target Completion Date:** September 30, 2018

**Responsible Official:** Kevin Gallagher, Associate Director, USGS Core Science Systems Mission Area

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