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Williams To:

02/08/2005 06:29 Subject: Director's Message Regarding Competitive Sourcing  
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Note to Supervisors: Please ensure that employees under your supervision receive a copy of this memorandum.

To: All Employees

From: Director

Re: Competitive Sourcing

Over the past few months many of you have heard about, or been involved in, the Service's efforts under "Competitive Sourcing." I want to update all of you on where we stand with the Competitive Sourcing program, and what our next steps will be.

For those of you for whom this is new, let me explain what Competitive Sourcing is. This program is part of the President's Management Agenda and is designed to generate significant savings and improved performance for the government. Agencies throughout the government are engaged in this process. Under competitive sourcing, we -- and every Federal agency -- have identified functions that are potentially "commercial" (meaning you could find similar services listed in the Yellow Pages). We have a plan, called the Green Plan, for review of the potentially commercial functions over the next few years.

I want to be clear that Competitive Sourcing is not the same thing as privatization. Privatization is when the government decides to get out of a particular program or function altogether. Competitive Sourcing is a program that allows private sector contractors and government employees to bid to see who can perform work in the most efficient way. If the government wins the bid, there may be changes to position descriptions or organization to achieve a more efficient organization. However, if a commercial entity should win a competition, there would be a 90-day phase-in period that includes possible job offers by the commercial entity to affected employees.

Here in the Service, we have already conducted a streamlined study under this initiative on Office Automation Clerk positions. The government employees won this process. More recently we began standard competitive sourcing studies for Animal Caretakers (WG5048, renamed Aquatic Species Husbandry) and GS-404 Biological Science Technicians (renamed Biological Support Services).

Due to my experience and involvement with these studies, I became convinced that there were significant problems with the competitive sourcing process for Aquatic Species Husbandry, a set of functions that are performed by very dispersed field positions. These problems made it clear that we

could not optimally achieve the goals of the President's Management Agenda with this competition. In addition, based on what we have learned from our experience thus far, I believe that the Biological Support Services study needs further consideration. I have recommended to the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, who is the DOI Competitive Sourcing official, that we terminate the Aquatic Species Husbandry competition and that we review the Biological Support Services study to determine whether we can conduct this competition in a way that meets the goals of the President's Management Agenda and is fair to both our employees and to potential private bidders.

To continue our commitment to the competitive sourcing process, I have proposed some alternatives to the Department. These include, but are not limited to, obtaining the Department's immediate approval to undertake two streamlined studies and one standard competition by the end of 2005 in the broad category of Administrative Support functions, one of the groups identified in our Green Plan. Also, I am proposing that we soon begin to preplan for the next category of functions identified in the Service's Green Plan for FY 2006, which includes engineering, architecture, and some other professional functions.

I hope to be able to conclude these discussions with the Department and receive the Department's decision very shortly. As soon as we are certain of our direction, I will share that information with you.

If the Department accepts my proposal, we would immediately begin studies on the Administrative Support functions. It is our intent that these studies would not apply to secretarial or clerical positions across the entire Service, but more likely would focus on a subset of positions in particular geographic locations that have a concentration of these positions. The history of competitive sourcing thus far suggests that our employees stand an excellent chance to win any competition.

I understand that this process is upsetting to some employees. While I cannot guarantee a particular outcome, I can tell you that we will have excellent teams working on our competitive sourcing studies and bids, and we will do our utmost to demonstrate that the Service has developed the most efficient organization for all the functions we are studying.

I promise to keep you informed as this process moves forward.