

ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE

Civil Rights Barometer

August 2009

Civil Rights Barometer

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Appendix I—Raw Data, Total Responses

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INTRODUCTION

CREC has developed a web-based feedback system to gauge employee opinion on APHIS civil rights programs. The feedback system is designed to solicit opinions from new employees and those who plan to leave the agency. Obtaining this information is key to our being able to measure civil rights progress in APHIS. This is an analysis of the data collected in March of 2009.

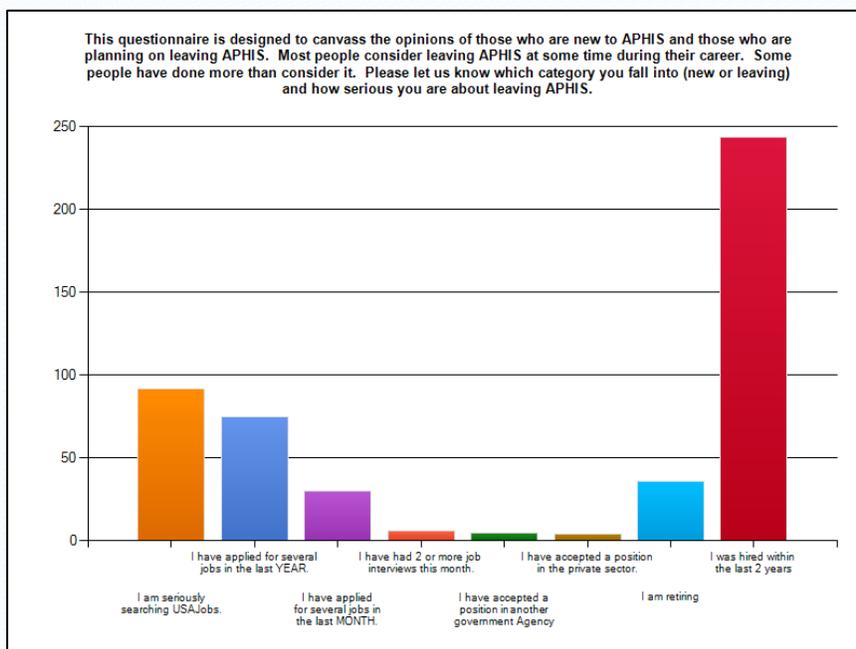
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There were 383 respondents; 241 indicated that they were not seeking another job, 142 said they were. Job seekers provided negative responses 67% of the time while non-job seekers did so 42% of the time. Although those who are seeking employment elsewhere had a more negative view of APHIS overall, they provided valuable insights for improving APHIS and retaining those employees who have not already decided to leave. While those who are not seeking employment have a more positive view of APHIS, it is not overwhelmingly positive and in fact, varies by topic. They have also made valuable comments regarding improvement and retention.

Key Concerns

Employees left many comments (856); some describing a concern, some making a positive affirmation, some suggested an improvement or retention strategy, and some posing a rhetorical query. The following are some of the concerns voiced by more than a few employees. Many more concerns are listed in the "Reasons for Leaving" and "Recommendations for Improvement" sections.

1. Some supervisors are viewed as bullies, who in the worse case scenarios harass employees and in the more moderate scenario, fail to provide the caring and concern about employee welfare and development that would inspire loyalty and devotion to the organization.
2. Training appears to be very limited in the field and employees are encouraged to use AgLearn instead of classroom instruction. (This is consistent with recent USDA guidance.) Employees express concern regarding the allocation of training resources for classroom and professional training. Employees perceive that:



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- only employees located in headquarters, supervisors, and “favorites” are allowed to attend training
 - career development is not encouraged by their immediate supervisors
 - no funding is available for training (particularly if it involves travel)
 - decisions regarding training are unfairly based on one’s job series, a protected category (age, race, etc), how recently one was hired, or friendship (favoritism)
3. Overwhelmingly, employees who are seeking employment elsewhere are doing so because they cannot advance; promotion potential does not exist in their current job series, career development to another series with promotion potential is not apparent, and higher pay is available elsewhere.
 4. Six employees indicated that their skills are not being fully utilized and they are seeking more rewarding work.
 5. Twenty employees express frustration with managers who have been in their positions for many years and what they perceive as favoritism and nepotism.

When it comes to Equal Employment Opportunity, employees expressed many different opinions. No specific opinion was expressed by the bulk of the employees. Aside from those employees who were pleased, a few themes rose to the surface:

1. Twelve employees said that there are too many unnecessary emails and resources devoted to civil rights while three others requested more visible communications like seminars on their work site and briefings for new employees.
2. Eight employees expressed concern about the complaints system.
3. Thirty-one employees said that discrimination continues to persist unabated.
4. Seventeen employees expressed fear of reprisal and lack of confidence in the system to protect them should they file complaints.

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DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONSES

Number Responding	<u>Non-Job Seekers¹</u> <u>241</u>	-	<u>Job Seekers</u> <u>142</u>
<u>Employment Status</u>			
Retiring	34		2
New Hires	207		37
 <u>Race, Gender and National Origin</u>			
White men	40		30
White women	80		26
Black men	6		0
Black women	10		8
Hispanic men	2		2
Hispanic women	6		2
Asian American/Pacific Islander men	2		1
Asian American/Pacific Islander women	2		2
American Indian/Native Alaskan men	1		0
American Indian/Native Alaskan women	1		0
"Other" men	4		4
"Other" women	1		3
Did not say	86		64
 <u>Disability</u>			
Total Number of Persons with a Disability	<u>13</u>		<u>12</u>
Targeted	2		2
Reported	10		9
Did not say	1		1

¹ Non Job-Seekers include those who are retiring and recent hires who are not seeking a new job.

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SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Respondents were provided the option of answering any or all of the questions on the survey. The following is the Civil Rights Barometer reading for all of the questions from all major categories:

Civil Rights Barometer as of March 30, 2009				
Category	Job Seekers	Retirees	New Hires	Total
EEO	23.4%	32.7%	62.8%	46.4%
Training and Development	43.7	51.8	62.3	56.5
Retention	15.5	29.4	68.2	49.5
Program Delivery	40.3	49.5	51.6	46.9
General Improvement	49.1	37.4	67.9	65.8
Grand Total	40.4%	37.7%	59.7%	59.5%

The following questions were not included in the Barometer reading:

Leaving to Accept promotion in another Government Agency	20.0% (11 employees)	0.0%	0.0%	5.8% (11 employees)
Aware that Grade level or career ladder is not competitive with another Government Agency	69.1% (38 employees)	64.7% (11 employees)	30.5% (36 employees)	44.7% (85 employees)

The questions on the barometer were in two formats. One was a 5 point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree that also had a N/A column. The other format was a Multiple Choice format in which the reader could select those statements that were true. Each statement was a positive statement.

The barometer reading was derived by using the same formula that the Office of Personnel Management used to calculate responses to questions found in the Annual Employee Survey (March 2006). The formula follows: add up all of the positive responses (i.e. those that answered Strongly Agree or Agree or selected a positive statement that was true for them); divide that number by the number of valid responses (all except N/A); and multiply that number by 100.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Barometer Reading: 46.4

As stated above, this reading is comprised of 3 groups of responses: New Hires, Retiree and Job Seekers.

Most new hires felt that:

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- Manager/supervisor ensures his/her employees adhere to civil rights laws. (82% of 79)
- Management treats APHIS employees fairly without regard to race, color, age, national origin, gender, religion, marital/family status, sexual orientation, or disability status. (80% of 79)
- Management is firmly committed to equal opportunity for all employees and applicants for employment. (75% of 79)
- Employee feedback is encouraged and valued. (67% of 81)
- Management takes proactive efforts to prevent unlawful discrimination and harassment in the workplace. (67% of 79)
- Management promptly, fairly and effectively addresses disputes in the workplace. (62% of 79)
- APHIS has a strong and effective EEO program. (60% of 80 employees)
- They knew how to request a Reasonable Accommodation. (59% of 79)
- Supervisors in my unit deal effectively with difficult people. (54% of 80)
- Allegations of discrimination have been immediately addressed by supervisors. (50% of 48)

Fewer new hires agreed that:

- Employee conflict is managed well. (46% of 78)
- APHIS provides Reasonable Accommodations swiftly and effectively. (47% of 79)

Most retiring employees (92% of 12), and over half of the job seekers (65% of 48) and new hires (59% of 79), said that they know how to request a reasonable accommodation for a disability. Half of the retiring employees felt that management takes proactive efforts to prevent unlawful discrimination/harassment in the workplace. Most of this group disagreed with all of the other indicators shown above.

Most of the job seekers did not agree with any EEO program indicators except that most of them knew how to request a reasonable accommodation for a disability (65% of 43).

Training and Development

Barometer Reading: 56.5

Most new hires felt that:

- They had access to the Leadership Development Toolkit (80% of 102 employees)
- Training and development opportunities were available to all employees in their work units. (69% of 102)
- They had been offered meaningful career development opportunities. (67 of 83)
- They were receiving adequate resources and support to implement their individual Development Plan or Learning Contract. (66% of 83)
- They had found the mandatory EEO training helpful. (52% of 83)
- Manager provided equitable training and career development resources for all employees in their work units. (51% of 83)
- Their work unit had adequate resources to provide the training needed for all to perform their jobs. (50% of 83 employees)

Fewer retiring employees agreed with the indicators above but their answers followed the same general trend. Eighty five percent said that had access to the leadership Development Toolkit, 54 to 55 percent agree with the remaining top 3 indicators. Most disagreed with the last 3 indicators

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with only 23% stating that their work unit had adequate resources to provide the training needed for all to perform their jobs.

Most job seekers who answered these questions disagreed with all of the above except that they do have access to the Leadership Development Toolkit.

Retention Strategies

Barometer Reading: 49.5

Most new hires felt that:

- There is ample opportunity to grow in one's career within APHIS (59% of 118)
- APHIS work culture welcomes values and effectively utilizes all employees (78% of 118)

Most retiring employees and job seekers did not agree with the above statements.

Eleven employees reported that they were leaving the Agency to accept a promotion in another agency in the same occupational series and grade level/career ladder. Forty-seven non-job seekers and 38 job seekers indicated that they were aware of policies affecting grade structure such that their grade level or career ladder was not competitive with other Government agencies. Although 38 job seekers mentioned this, they did not mention it specifically as a reason for their departure.

Program Delivery

Barometer Reading: 46.9

Most of the employees in all three groups (129 new hires, 22 retirees, 69 job seekers) agreed that:

- The building is accessible to persons with disabilities (82% new hires, 59% retirees, 72% job seekers).
- They know how to conduct APHIS business without discriminating. (91% new hires, 83 % job seekers, 82% 22 retirees,)

Most new hires agreed that:

- They are encouraged to participate in outreach (56%)
- That the Administrator's Civil Rights Policy Statement is posted prominently (60%).

Less than or half of employees in all three groups agreed with the following:

- Persons with disabilities have access to all programs and activities (47% new hires, 45% job seekers; 27% retirees).
- APHIS programs and activities are advertised effectively (46% new hires, 23% retirees, 22% job seekers)
- They know how to handle a program discrimination complaint (50% retirees, 42% job seekers, 47% new hires)

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- There is adequate communication with persons with Limited English Proficiency (37% new hires, 19% job seekers, 23% retirees)
- "And Justice for All" poster is displayed prominently (41% retirees, 37% new hires, 30% of job seekers)
- They were aware of Federal Relay System (17% job seekers, 14% new hires, 9% retirees)

General Impressions of APHIS

Barometer Reading: 65.8

Few of the retirees and job seekers and a little over half of the non-job seekers (57%) agreed that APHIS had met their expectations. Even so, most new hires said that they would and/or had recommended APHIS to a friend (84% and 62% of 122). Most retirees and job seekers did not agree.

Reasons for Leaving and Recommendations for Improvement

Employees shared many reasons for leaving and ideas for improving APHIS. The following is a list of these ideas (many were made by several people, some by only one person):

Reasons for Leaving

- No promotion potential
- No opportunities for advancement or education for non-permanent employees
- Favoritism, nepotism and cronyism
- APHIS is a cut throat Agency that does not value its employees
- No room for minorities at the senior level except for "a token few"
- Incompetent new hires (respondent thinks managers do this because they fear competition with competent employees)
- Increase skills in a different discipline (scientific vs. inspection)
- Poor work ethic
- Lack of accountability
- More job satisfaction
- Managers harass employees
- Employee received a threatening email from supervisor before starting employment
- Training opportunities in the field are not granted because they entail travel; so those who live near training firms have an unfair advantage
- Supervisor does not understand the full realm of employee's duties and responsibilities
- Managers retaliate against employees (sometimes based on inaccurate perceptions)
- Managers ignore safety concerns and disparage employees who bring them up
- Dissatisfaction with some of the new leadership

Recommendations for Improvement

Suggestions for improvement are listed under the main topic to which they appear to be referring. Many could be applicable to several categories.

General

- APHIS needs to have a real commitment to improve APHIS

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- Managers need a grasp of the dynamics in the field (and consider the impact on all levels of the organization) before making policy
- Change the titles from SPHD, OIC, Supervisor to coach, mentor, counselor or team leaders for much more positive results
- Remove some Directors who have been in the same place for over 20 years, which has led to cronyism and nepotism, or every 2 years; bring in leaders from outside USDA

Equal Employment Opportunity

- Allow advancement regardless of gender and sexual orientation
- Make it easier for divorced men and women with children
- Equal opportunity and fair actions
- Get competent ethical people, not mouthpieces and pawns of senior management, into the Civil Rights offices
- Allow managers to file complaints against their employees when they feel harassed or threatened (has been told it would look like retaliation)
- Establish 2 separate groups of counselors, one for management and one for employees; currently it seems like EEO counselors represent management.
- Improve Civil Rights training, accountability and enforcement (policy statements and mandatory on-line training are not enough)
- Protect complainants from retaliation, (CREC needs to keep tabs on management decisions that are really retaliatory or continued discrimination)
- Stop contracting workers on civil rights cases

Retention

- Treat employees as professionals and with respect
- Have employee "bonding" activities all across the country
- Provide salary commensurate with qualifications and reimburse time-in-grade lost by hiring employee at lower grade
- Offer retention bonuses
- Embrace and promote diversity
- Would like educational reimbursement
- Open advanced training to all grade levels instead of pigeon holing people because of their current position.

Supervision

- Include employee input in the selection of their supervisor
- Allow employees to evaluate supervisors without fear of retribution, base pay on this evaluation
- Train supervisors in leadership and basic proficiency of the skills required for the job BEFORE (or in the first year) they assume the position
- Less micromanagement
- Enforce consequences for violating policies equally
- Provide direction to supervisors
- Would like a supervisor to be more interested in one's career aspirations
- Would appreciate a supervisor who give positive feedback

Human Capital Management

- Align job series and grade with tasks

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On-boarding and treatment of new employees

- Provide adequate direction and training to new employees; assign a mentor
- Introduce new employees so everyone knows who they are and why they are there

Operations

- Adhere to USDA space management policy
- Get APHIS back in the ports
- More work at home and flexible schedules
- Provide high speed internet to employees who work at home
- More effective administrative support and systems (7 months to get an SF-50, required to travel before receiving bank card and then not reimbursed because no bank card number was in the system)
- More structure, support and respect for employees who work remotely from their counterparts at Riverdale

Employee Benefits

- Offer better dental insurance
- Offer special types of benefits to employees beyond what OPM offers (like the VA www.federalfirst.com)

Budget and Resource Allocation

- Fund programs if the work is being performed
- More resources in the field
- Complete background checks or at least check references before hiring

Hiring

- Fill positions quicker (almost a year before advertising)
- Hire from more diverse backgrounds (not necessarily veterinarians)

Communication and Conflict/Issue Resolution

- Address issues with colleagues and provide feedback about the resolution without intimidating the employee who complained
- Talk with employees and make it simpler for them to speak with a competent employee counselor
- Include Administrator on persistent problems
- Address issues with colleagues fairly when it involves a man and a woman (as opposed to determining that the woman is too emotional and defending the man).

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March 12 through 31, 2009
Appendix XIX—Raw Data, Total Results, APHIS Civil Rights Barometer

APPENDIX I—Raw Data, Total Results, APHIS Civil Rights Barometer

Equal Employment Opportunity

You may now indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Response Count
APHIS has a strong and effective EEO program	24	35	55	17	19	5	155
Employee conflict is managed well.	14	27	42	28	36	7	154
Employee feedback is encouraged and valued.	21	44	28	23	33	2	151
Supervisors in my unit deal effectively with difficult people.	19	37	32	21	40	6	155
Allegations of discrimination have been immediately addressed by supervisors.	10	22	34	17	23	48	154
Comments							37
<i>answered question</i>							155
<i>skipped question</i>							228

Please mark the box next to the choices that you feel are true.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Management is firmly committed to equal opportunity for all employees and applicants for employment.	54.5%	73
My manager/supervisor ensures his/her employees adhere to civil rights laws.	64.9%	87
Management takes proactive efforts to prevent unlawful discrimination/harassment in the workplace,	50.0%	67
Management promptly, fairly and effectively addresses disputes in the workplace.	44.0%	59
I believe that management treats APHIS employees fairly without regard to race, color, age, national origin, gender, religion, marital/family status, sexual orientation, or disability status.	61.9%	83
I know how to request a reasonable accommodation for a disability.	64.2%	86
APHIS provides reasonable accommodations swiftly and effectively.	39.6%	53
Comments		33
<i>answered question</i>		134
<i>skipped question</i>		249

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Appendix XIX—Raw Data, Total Results, APHIS Civil Rights Barometer

Training and Development

Please indicate which statements are true for you.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I have been offered meaningful career development opportunities.	60.3%	73
I have found mandatory EEO training helpful.	50.4%	61
I am receiving adequate resources and support to implement my Individual Development Plan or Learning Contract.	61.2%	74
Comments		65
<i>answered question</i>		121
<i>skipped question</i>		262

Please check the box next to each choice that you believe is true regarding equal access to training opportunities.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Training and development opportunities are available to all employees in my work unit.	57.5%	92
The work unit has adequate resources to provide the training needed for all to perform their jobs.	42.5%	68
Managers provide equitable training and career development resources for all employees in this work unit.	41.3%	66
I have access to the Leadership Development Toolkit.	83.1%	133
Comments		48
<i>answered question</i>		160
<i>skipped question</i>		223

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Appendix XIX—Raw Data, Total Results, APHIS Civil Rights Barometer

Retention Strategies--Please select the box next to the choices that are true for you.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
There is ample opportunity to grow in one's career within APHIS	42.1%	80
I am leaving/left to accept a promotion in another agency in the same occupational series.	5.8%	11
I am aware of policies affecting grade structure such that the grade level/career ladder in my occupation at APHIS is not competitive with other Government agencies.	44.7%	85
APHIS has a work culture that welcomes, values and effectively utilizes all employees. (This includes gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals; as well as men, women, minorities, persons of all ages, persons with disabilities, persons with various or no religious beliefs, etc.)	56.8%	108
Comments.		68
	<i>answered question</i>	190
	<i>skipped question</i>	193

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Program Delivery		
Please mark the box next to each choice that is true for you.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I am encouraged to participate in outreach activities.	46.4%	102
I have noticed that persons with disabilities have access to all programs and activities at my work unit.	44.1%	97
I believe that APHIS programs and activities are advertised effectively to the public, industry and interested organizations.	35.9%	79
I know how to conduct APHIS business without discrimination.	87.3%	192
I know what to do if a member of the public, cooperator, partner or another entity makes a program discrimination complaint.	45.5%	100
I believe that APHIS adequately communicates with persons who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) so that they may fully access programs and activities.	29.5%	65
The "And Justice For All" poster is prominently located where the visiting public may view the poster.	35.5%	78
The building in which I work is accessible to people with disabilities (parking, rest rooms, meeting rooms etc.).	76.8%	169
I am aware of the Federal Relay System.	14.5%	32
The Administrator's Civil Rights Policy Statement, dated November 18, 2008, is posted in a prominent location where the visiting public may view the statement.	53.6%	118
Comments		35
	<i>answered question</i>	220
	<i>skipped question</i>	163

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General Impressions of APHIS--please select the choices that are true for you.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
After I arrived at work, I found that APHIS met all of my expectations.	38.4%	81
I would recommend employment at APHIS to a friend.	58.3%	123
I have recommended employment at APHIS to a friend.	47.9%	101
I am leaving APHIS.	29.9%	63
If you are leaving APHIS, please indicate where you are going and what could be done to persuade you to reconsider your decision to leave.		75
	<i>answered question</i>	211
	<i>skipped question</i>	172

Which of the following would you change and how?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Training	59.3%	112
Communication	55.0%	104
Awards, Perks and Benefits	45.5%	86
APHIS Policy	19.6%	37
Leadership (team leaders, supervisors, managers)	49.7%	94
Issues with Colleagues	23.8%	45
Other	12.2%	23
Please explain		141
	<i>answered question</i>	189
	<i>skipped question</i>	194