United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

AUG 30 2011

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Markey:

Thank you for your August 16, 2011, letters to Secretary Salazar and myself inquiring about the investigation by the Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General (OIG) of Dr. Charles Monnett. I am responding to both letters on behalf of the Secretary and myself. In light of the independence with which the OIG conducts its investigations, we are unable to provide many details about the investigation of Dr. Monnett. With respect to the OIG's investigation, I understand that the OIG informed senior Departmental officials that it had received credible allegations by career employees relating to questions of scientific integrity, and that in the course of their investigation they identified additional issues relating to procurement integrity. It is our understanding that you sent a similar letter to the Inspector General, and that that office is responding directly to you.

The OIG initiated its investigation of Dr. Monnett in early 2010—nearly a year before the Department of the Interior (DOI) policy on Integrity of Scientific and Scholarly Activities was adopted by this Agency. Therefore, because the DOI policy was not finalized until February 2011, any allegations against Dr. Monnett could not have been addressed through the DOI policy. No allegations of loss of scientific integrity against Dr. Monnett have been received through the process established by the DOI policy on Integrity of Scientific and Scholarly Activities.

As you mention in your letter, a relationship between the DOI policy and the OIG should exist—and in fact it does. The OIG was involved in the development of the DOI policy and the policy establishes clear mechanisms to refer issues related to fraud, waste, and abuse to the OIG. As the Scientific Integrity Officer for DOI, I am presently in consultation with the OIG to develop a process for engaging the DOI Scientific Integrity Officers (which were created under the DOI policy) when the OIG is confronted with issues related to scientific and scholarly integrity. It is our view that the Department's Scientific Integrity process should be available as a resource to the OIG when the OIG is investigating claims that may pertain to scientific integrity. When the details of that relationship are developed, I would be happy to provide a briefing to your staff. Per your request, attached is the complete DOI policy on Integrity of Scientific and Scholarly Activities. Section 3.8 is the process for handling allegations of scientific and scholarly misconduct.

You also asked in your letter whether my office had been contacted by the OIG or been consulted in the investigation of Dr. Monnett. After I learned of the investigation on July 26, 2011, via the BOEMRE Scientific Integrity Officer, I contacted the OIG. On August 2, I spoke with Mr. John Dupuy of the OIG and was briefed on the outlines of the investigation as it related to scientific integrity matters. I met with Mr. Dupuy in Denver on August 16 to discuss the matter further, including the recent allegations raised by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. Consistent with our view that our scientific integrity process should be available as a resource when OIG investigations encounter such claims, I will be assisting the OIG in reviewing the scientific integrity claims that have been raised in this matter.

Again, thank you for your concern and inquiry. If you have any further questions about the DOI policy on Integrity of Scientific and Scholarly Activities, please contact me at (303) 989-3311.

Sincerely,

Ralph Morgenweck

Ralph Morgenweck
DOI Scientific Integrity Officer

Attachment