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Date: December 20, 2001

Route To:

Subject: Professional Ethics

To: All Employees

A serious situation has occurred concerning employee professionalism and ethical standards of conduct. This incident is a reminder that we must maintain the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct in carrying out our tasks and work responsibilities.

In September 2000, as part of the ongoing interagency National Lynx Survey, three National Forest System employees submitted an unauthorized lynx hair sample to the survey coordinators for laboratory analysis. An investigation revealed that other individuals had submitted similar, but unrelated, unauthorized lynx hair samples to the survey coordinators. Adding to the seriousness of this issue, a number of other employees knew about the activities but did not report them. Even if this was done to test the DNA analysis without intending to skew the survey results, this conduct is neither appropriate nor acceptable.

Although the unauthorized samples were detected and did not compromise the validity of the lynx survey, such situations call into question our agency's integrity. We are a science-based organization, and ANY efforts to collect, analyze, display, communicate and use species or other resource information must be conducted to professional and ethical standards and within established scientific protocols.

Throughout the history of the Forest Service, the agency has established and maintained a reputation for highly professional and credible work. I have great confidence in the integrity of Forest Service employees but I am taking this matter very seriously and so must you. Our agency's credibility demands that we must ensure that this situation remains an isolated example of poor judgment and does not repeat itself. We must provide and use scientific information that is strictly factual.

After the discovery of the unauthorized samples an investigation was conducted. In light of continuing questions about the lynx survey, we have decided to ask the Inspector General to build on the previous investigation and look more fully into the entire lynx survey. It is my intention to ensure a situation like this does not happen again.

/s/ Dale N. Bosworth
DALE N. BOSWORTH
Chief



