

CLOSEOUT FOR M91010003

On January [REDACTED] 1991, OIG was informed by [REDACTED], a program officer in the Division [REDACTED] in the Directorate [REDACTED] that, since [REDACTED] 1989, the complainant, [REDACTED], a scientist at [REDACTED] had made repeated requests to [REDACTED] the subject, for data collected under NSF award [REDACTED]. In response to each of the complainant's requests the subject had promised, but subsequently failed, to provide copies of the data. At the complainant's request the program officer had attempted, several times, to secure the data from the subject, and had also been unsuccessful.

OIG found that the NSF project was awarded to the [REDACTED], the institution, and the complainant had worked under the subject's direction collecting this and other data. The subject had left the institution for a position with the federal government. On his departure, and relocation from the institution, the subject apparently took the only copies of some data collected during the project. The complainant wanted the data because it was important for his current project. It provided a rare, detailed, historical account of the biotic composition of a site that would greatly assist current environmental assessments of the site.

On February [REDACTED] 1991, OIG contacted the subject and requested that the data be provided to the complainant. OIG explained that the open sharing of data, samples, and other research results in response to requests from other investigators was important to NSF. In response to this and our subsequent requests the subject agreed to supply the data but failed to do so. Over the next 3 years OIG contacted the subject periodically with a request to release the data. Each request was met with an unfulfilled promise to release the data. Although the subject eventually agreed to release the data to a repository where it would be freely available to interested scientists, he failed to do so.

OIG contacted the complainant and learned that he still desired the data and that the data had increased in historical value and in significance to current projects. On January [REDACTED] 1994, OIG informed the scientist that the National Science Board expected "investigators to share with other researchers, at no more than incremental cost and within a reasonable time, the data, samples, physical collections, and other supporting materials created or gathered in the course of the work" supported by NSF. The subject's repeated failure to supply the requested data was not in conformance with this expectation. OIG informed him that his repeated failure to fulfill his promise had raised concerns about the data, and that in some circumstances the failure to share data could be considered a serious deviation from accepted practice within the scientific community. OIG informed the scientist that if the data were not released by a specified date it would begin an investigation into the case.

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OIG subsequently confirmed that the subject had released the data to the repository. The manager of the repository confirmed that the data were historically valuable and would be extremely useful in current research projects. OIG considered the release of the data to the repository a satisfactory resolution to the case. This case was closed without further action.

cc: Staff Scientist, Deputy AIG-Oversight, AIG-Oversight, Counsel to IG, IG