

## Closeout for M99110051

On November 4, 1999, a Program Director<sup>1</sup> told us he had received a letter from the complainant<sup>2</sup> alleging misconduct in science. We contacted the complainant who alleged that, in the subject's paper in an electronic journal,<sup>3</sup> the subject<sup>4</sup> failed to properly cite data such that it appeared he was taking credit for the complainant's data. The complainant also alleged that the subject failed to obtain the proper permits for scientific specimen collection from three state parks and one national park before collecting the specimens.

With respect to the data issue, the subject told us the journal article had been primarily prepared by his post-doctoral researcher<sup>5</sup> who had mistakenly attributed the data in question to the subject. The post-doctoral researcher admitted that he had assumed that the data in question was the subject's and had not verified its source with the subject before including it in the manuscript. The post-doctoral researcher and the subject said that because the paper was online, it could be edited after posting, and they would change it based on the complaints he received from us.

With regard to permits, the subject provided a permit for collection from national forest land and said he obtained oral permission at the gates of the state parks from which he collected. The administrators from the three state parks and the national park from which the subject collected samples said that oral permission was insufficient, and the subject should have obtained a written permit.

We asked the subject and his university's Authorized Organizational Representative<sup>6</sup> if the subject's proposal, with its lack of permits for collection, was prepared and given the appropriate oversight according to university policy. We also asked them to contact the parks to seek appropriate resolution of this matter.

Although NSF places overall responsibility with the Awardee for making sound scientific and administrative decisions (and had not articulated a specific requirement for specimen collection), both the Authorized Organizational Representative and the subject said that the university did not have a specific policy regarding collection of specimens for scientific research. In this case, however, the proposal did not specify collection sites so that the Authorized Organizational Representative did not address the issue of the specific, required permits. The Authorized Organizational Representative said

---

<sup>1</sup> (footnote redacted).

<sup>2</sup> (footnote redacted).

<sup>3</sup> (footnote redacted).

<sup>4</sup> (footnote redacted).

<sup>5</sup> (footnote redacted).

<sup>6</sup> (footnote redacted).

that after discussion at the university on the topic, there are plans to revise the university's research policy manual to include specimen collection. Regarding the permits, the subject contacted the various parks explaining what had happened and asked what he should do in response. Because his specimens were not considered wildlife or an endangered species, the park administrators only requested to know how many specimens he collected and the location from which he collected.

In summary, we verified the data citation in electronic journal paper had been corrected, and we made the subject aware that a written permit is generally required for collection at parks. He told us he will ensure the proper permits are obtained in the future. This inquiry is closed and no further action will be taken on this case.

cc: Investigations, IG