



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
**OFFICE OF MARINE AND AVIATION OPERATIONS**  
 COMMISSIONED PERSONNEL CENTER  
 Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3282

**FEB 06 2017**

MEMORANDUM FOR: Rear Admiral David A. Score, NOAA  
 Director, NOAA Corps

FROM: Captain Amilynn E. Adams, NOAA  
 Director, Commissioned Personnel Center

*Amilynn E. Adams, CAPT/NOAA*

SUBJECT: 2017 Officer Corps Management Plan

**PURPOSE:**

The Officer Corps Management Plan (OCMP) is an annual plan for the management of the NOAA Corps workforce. The OCMP provides recommendations for Fiscal Year 2017 (FY 17) promotion zones based on a projection of planned officer accessions and attritions, an analysis and projection of historical officer accession and attrition data, and Service needs. The OCMP serves as an execution plan to initiate the NOAA Corps promotion process.

**OVERVIEW:**

The Commissioned Personnel Center (CPC) develops the annual OCMP by analyzing on-board workforce strength, attrition trends and forecasts, and accessions required to maintain the commissioned officer workforce. The decisions made with this memorandum enable the NOAA Corps to meet workforce management needs within legal requirements.

There are three steps to the officer promotion process: eligibility, selection, and promotion. Each step is controlled by laws, regulations, and administrative procedures. The promotion process for the NOAA Corps is described in NOAA Corps Directive (NCD) Chapter 4, Part 2.

- 1) Eligibility – Eligibility for promotion to each grade is provided in NCD Chapter 4, Part 3. The *critical* elements considered in determining promotion eligibility are: 1) completion of required training; 2) years of service (YOS); 3) time-in-grade (TIG, Table 1 below); and 4) medical qualification.

Table 1 – Required Time-in-Grade for Promotion	
Captain (O-6)	Four years in the permanent grade of commander
Commander (O-5)	Four years in the permanent grade of lieutenant commander
Lieutenant Commander (O-4)	Three years in the permanent grade of lieutenant
Lieutenant (O-3)	Two years in the permanent grade of lieutenant (junior grade)
Lieutenant (junior grade) (O-2)	One year in the permanent grade of ensign



- 2) Selection – A range, or zone, of officers on the lineal list eligible for selection are evaluated and recommended (or not recommended) for promotion by an Officer Personnel Board. Officers are considered to be “in zone” if they meet eligibility requirements and have not twice failed to be selected for promotion or have an approved retirement. The zone size is dependent on the number of vacancies in each rank, the opportunity of selection, the time required to promote selected officers to fill known and estimated vacancies, and the needs of the Service.
  
- 3) Promotion – Following selection for promotion, officers may have their promotion effected anywhere from 4 to 18 months after notification of selection. The variation in timing is dependent on differences between planned and actual vacancies, promotion approval processes, executive calendars, or the needs of the Service.

**DEFINITIONS:**

Authorized Strength. Public Law 110-386 established NOAA Corps’ authorized strength at 321 commissioned officers. Flag officers are not included in determining the authorized strength.

Accession. Accession is the increase in strength through bringing new officers into the Service via Basic Officer Training Class (BOTC) or Inter-Service Transfer (IST).

Attrition. Attrition is any retirement, death, resignation, or separation of a member from the Service. Attrition rates are calculated annually using the number of officers that detach from the NOAA Corps and the average annual strength. Attrition creates vacancies in the respective grades and may affect the actual number of NOAA Corps promotions effected in a given year. Table 2 shows historical actual attrition by grade for the three previous years.

<b>Table 2 – Historical Actual Attrition by Grade</b>				
	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	Average
O-6	7	3	10	7
O-5	2	3	1	2
O-4	1	8	1	3
O-3	4	7	7	6
O-2	6	6	5	6
O-1	4	4	4	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	24	31	28	28
<b>Overall Percent Attrition</b>	7.5%	9.7%	8.9%	8.7%
<b>Average Annual Strength</b>	318	321	313	317
Note: Does not include officers recalled from retirement. Averages in each grade are rounded to the nearest whole number.				

Average Annual Strength (AAS). The average number of officers on active duty in the NOAA Corps over a given fiscal year. The OCMP is planned using the authorized strength. Vacancies in each rank are determined and promotions are effected using actual strength.

Cohort. A grouping of officers in sequential order on the lineal list that share identical or similar time-in-grade and/or total years of service.

Control Grade Distribution by Law. 33 U.S.C. § 3004 specifies the distribution of NOAA Corps officers by grade. Of the total number of officers on the lineal list, the proportion (in percentage) and total number of officers authorized in each permanent grade for an authorized strength of 321 is shown in Table 3. The actual number of officers in each grade is controlled by the average annual strength of the NOAA Corps.

<b>Table 3 – Grade Distribution of Officers (33 U.S.C. § 3004)</b>		
Grade	Percentage By Law	Authorized Number of Officers
O-6	8%	26
O-5	14%	45
O-4	19%	61
O-3	23%	74
O-2	18%	58
O-1	18%	57*
<b>Total Authorized</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>321</b>
*The number of officers in each grade is rounded to the nearest whole number. The number of ensigns is decreased by one to account for rounding error and to keep the total authorized strength at 321.		

Vacancies. The planned vacancies are based on the average attrition rate per grade over three prior years, approved detachment dates of known attritions, and planned promotion of officers to the next grade.

Opportunity of Selection and Promotion Zone Size. To meet service need, the Director, NOAA Corps has the authority to increase or decrease the opportunity of selection by 10 percent of the percent opportunity listed in NCD 04204 and shown in Table 4 below.

<b>Table 4 – Opportunity of Selection</b>	
To Grade	Percent Opportunity (+ or - 10%)
O-6	50% (40-60%)
O-5	70% (60-80%)
O-4	80% (70-90%)
O-3	Determined annually (typically 90%)
O-2	100% of qualified ensigns

Per NCD, the number of officers in a promotion zone (the zone size) shall not be less than the number of selections planned, divided by the applicable opportunity of selection shown in the table above. For example, if four O-6 vacancies are to be filled, and 50% is the opportunity of selection, the zone size will be  $4/.5 = 8$ .

#### **DISCUSSION:**

There are several workforce challenges that influence the OCMP. First, the projected number of O-6 and O-5 vacancies is greater than the number of eligible candidates. The cohort groups for promotion to O-6 (and to a lesser extent O-5) are shallow with relatively low time-in-grade and total years of service. CPC projects that there will be at least two unfilled and available O-6 positions, assuming an average retirement rate of senior O-6s and with time-in-grade waivers to expand the number of eligible candidates. There is no indication that the total attrition rates in FY 17 will be substantially higher or lower than in previous years. However, when there is known attrition in a particular grade that is higher than the projected attrition for that grade, the known attrition data is used for calculating vacancies. Secondly, the junior officer ranks are much more stable with slower promotion rates due to the cascading effect of vacancies and distribution of officers by grade. Finally, the historical solution to filling rank vacancies for officers in the BOTC-92 to BOTC-100 cohort has just relied upon time-in-grade waivers and slowing promotion rates. Neither of these tactics are beneficial to officer career development or retention. The inability to fill the senior ranks with time-in-grade qualified candidates from these cohorts creates a down-stream promotion impact on more junior ranks.

Given these factors along with the need to balance career development against rank progression, and with the goal of maintaining an average authorized strength of 321, this OCMP recommends a more active approach to management at all ranks, and in particular the junior officer ranks, to include increasing average BOTC class size, implementing the Annual Review of the lineal list, and adjusting the opportunity for selection for O-6 to 60% for FY 17. These actions plan for an estimated average annual strength of 318 officers.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The recommended zone sizes for FY 2017 have been established to optimize years of service in senior ranks while balancing the need to fill vacancies and providing promotion opportunity to high performing junior officers. The opportunity of selection and zone sizes have been established to ensure the Corps is managed as efficiently as possible within the limits of our laws to maintain the 321 authorized strength and grade distribution. Until the Secretary receives authority from Congress to increase the NOAA Corps authorized strength, promotion rates should continue to normalize, i.e., slow down, and time-in-grade will increase for all ranks except ensigns who by law must be promoted before the completion of 3 years of service or be separated. However, due to the nature of our restrictive grade distribution laws, if there are spikes in actual attrition in a particular grade, promotions can speed up for that grade and depending on which grade that occurs in, it could have a cascading effect on other grades. Involuntary separation of under-performing officers will become much more common at lower years of service than in previous years and will serve to modestly increase promotion rates at the more junior ranks. This plan will allow the NOAA Corps to retain high-performing individuals, through consistent execution of policies and legal authorities, including the resumption of the

Annual Review and effecting separations earlier during non-selection for promotion. The Annual Review further serves to evaluate the health of the NOAA Corps and to identify and reward high performing officers. Based on this analysis, the following actions are respectfully submitted for your approval:

- A. **Zone Size, Board Schedule, and Opportunity of Selection:** CPC recommends you approve the following board schedule, zones sizes, and opportunity of selection for promotion to the next higher grade and authorize the Officer Personnel Board to select up to the number of officers recommended for selection. The Board schedule may be adjusted by +/- 2 weeks.

To Be Grade	Board Date (on or about)	Projected Vacancies	Zone Size	OOS Percentage Rounded Off	Select
O-6	1 May 2017	8	10	60%	6
O-5	2 May 2017	12	13	70%	9
O-4	3 May 2017	15	19	80%	15
O-3	4 May 2017	24	27	90%	24
O-2	5 May 2017	21	21	100% (if qualified)	21
O-2	18 September 2017	4	8	100% (if qualified)	8

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date 2/6/17
   
 Do Not Concur \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- B. **Time-in-Grade Waivers:** In accordance with NCD 04203B, when the needs of the NOAA Corps require, the Director may adjust length of time-in-grade requirements, to the extent that time-in-grade requirements are not otherwise fixed by statute. CPC recommends that you approve five waivers for time-in-grade to expand the zone of eligible candidates for promotion to captain from five to ten officers. CPC recommends that you approve four waivers for time-in-grade to expand the zone of eligible candidates for promotion to commander from nine to thirteen officers. CPC recommends you approve three waivers for time-in-grade to expand the zone of eligible candidates for promotion to lieutenant commander to meet the projected vacancies. CPC also recommends you approve twelve waivers for time-in-grade to expand the zone of eligible candidates for promotion to lieutenant to meet the projected vacancies. The officers selected for commander and below are projected to have the required time-in-grade at the time of promotion.

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date 2/6/17
   
 Do Not Concur \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

C. **Annual Review:** CPC recommends implementing an Annual Review of the lineal list in accordance with 33 U.S.C. § 3022.

  
Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date 2/6/17

Do Not Concur \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

D. **BOTC-130:** CPC recommends you approve the selection of up to 21 candidates for BOTC 130.

  
Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date 2/6/17

Do Not Concur \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

E. **Inter-Service Transfers:** CPC recommends approval to select up to 3 inter-service transfers to support aviation requirements.

  
Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date 2/6/17

Do Not Concur \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_