



February 17, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Rear Admiral (lower half) Nancy L. Hann, NOAA
Deputy Director, NOAA Corps

FROM: Commander Douglas E. MacIntyre, NOAA
Director, Commissioned Personnel Center

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2021 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 2021 (FY2021) 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 (OPB). Officers are considered to be "in zone" if they meet eligibility requirements, have not twice failed to be selected for promotion, and do not have an approved voluntary retirement or resignation. 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 2 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, and the needs of the Service.

DEFINITIONS:

Authorized Strength: Public Law No: 116-259 – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps Amendments Act of 2020 authorizes the number of commissioned officers not to exceed 500. 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), Inter-Service Transfer (IST), or original appointment.

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 (AAS). Attrition creates vacancies in the respective grades and affects the actual number of NOAA Corps promotions effected in a given year. Table 2 shows historical attrition rates by grade for the four previous years.

Table 2 - Historical Attrition and Percentage Rates by Grade						
	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	Average	*% Average
O-6	3	3	3	6	4	14.0%
O-5	2	4	2	8	4	15.0%
O-4	1	4	5	2	3	11.2%
O-3	13	8	13	7	10	38.3%
O-2	3	3	2	0	2	7.5%
O-1	5	5	4	1	4	14.0%
TOTAL	27	27	29	24	27	100.0%
Overall % Attrition	8.5%	8.5%	9.1%	7.5%	8.4%	*% Average based on four years; FY17-20
Avg. Annual Strength	317	319	317	319	318	
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 average annual strength. The number in each grade shall be computed by applying an applicable percentage to the total number of officers serving on active duty on the date the computation is made.

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: Pursuant to Public Law No: 116-259 – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps Amendments Act of 2020, not less frequently than once each year a computation to determine the number of officers on the lineal list authorized to be serving in each grade and set the grade distribution. Table 3 is the recommended grade distribution percentages for FY2021.

Table 3 – Recommended Grade Distribution of Officers		
Grade	Percentage Recommendation	Number of Officers
O-6	8%	26
O-5	14%	45
O-4	20%	66
O-3	22%	72
O-2	18%	59
O-1*	18%	59
Total Authorized	100%	327
* The number of officers in each grade rounds to the nearest whole number. If a final fraction occurs in computing the authorized number of officers in a grade, the nearest whole number shall be taken. If the fraction is one-half, the next higher whole number shall be taken.		

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

Opportunity of Selection (OOS): To meet Service need, the Director, NOAA Corps has the authority to adjust the OOS annually.

Table 4 - Opportunity of Selection	
To Grade	Percent Opportunity
O-6	Determined annually
O-5	Determined annually
O-4	Determined annually
O-3	Determined annually
O-2	100% of qualified ensigns

Promotion Zone Size: 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 approved table. In cases where the results contain a fraction, the zone size will be rounded to the next higher number. For example, if six O-6 vacancies are to be filled, and 50% is the opportunity of selection, the zone size will be $6/.5 = 12$.

DISCUSSION:

There are several workforce challenges that influence the FY2021 OCMP. First, the Coronavirus pandemic has decreased the attrition rate and at the time of the creation of this plan, we are observing half the normal attrition. The result of decreased attrition is fewer expected promotions for the year. This will result in officers waiting longer for promotions, and will decrease the number to promote. The course change relative to attrition is unknown once the pandemic subsides. The risk here is not selecting enough, or having too many officers for promotion given this change in attrition.

Second, is the implementation of Public Law No: 116-259 – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps Amendments Act of 2020. The law authorizes end strength growth so as not to exceed 500 NOAA Corps officers not including positions of importance and responsibilities, otherwise known as admirals. Public Law No: 116-259 also changes the grade distribution by grade allowing the Secretary to make a computation to determine the number of officers on the lineal list authorized to be serving in each grade. The number in each grade shall be computed by applying the applicable percentage to the total number of such officers serving on active duty on the date the computation is made. At the time of the board date, we estimate it to be approximately 327 officers, not including admirals. Unlike the United States Coast Guard that controls grades from O-4 through O-6, the NOAA Corps will be able to adjust percentages from O-1 to O-6 to better align rank with experience and responsibility as well as anticipate growth of the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps.

The third workforce challenge is funding. Pending an increase in funding, the Commissioned Personnel Center recommends growing the NOAA Corps at a rate of 11 to 12 officers per year to fully staff our current list of 367 assignments. Not until we reach 390 officers and have met the current operational rotation tempo of assignments will we begin adding more billets. As this law was enacted at the end of the first quarter of fiscal year 2021, implementation will be pending an increase in funding. Options include:

1. Status quo - adjusting grade distribution percentages and targeting an annual average strength at the current 321.
2. Half of the targeted increase to 327.
3. Full targeted increase to 332.

These three challenges pose a significant risk in maintaining grade distribution percentages, allowing for growth without exceeding resources, maintaining morale, and aligning organizational requirements through promotions. The most significant risk is the low attrition rate, which affects upward advancements that could stall, and create a situation where attrition spikes once the pandemic subsides. Since this year is unique, mitigation strategies will need close monitoring to meet legislative and resource restrictions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The OOS and zone sizes are established to ensure the NOAA Corps is managed as efficiently as possible to maintain an officer authorized and funded end strength and meet grade distribution as approved by the Secretary. These recommended zones meet the needs of the Service and projected growth in the grades for FY2021 and into FY2022.

Based on this analysis, the following actions are respectfully submitted for your approval:

- A. Grade Distribution Percentages. CPC recommends the following grade distribution percentages for approval to meet the needs of the service during the first implementation year of Public Law No: 116-259. The Director, NOAA Corps and Director of the OMAO is delegated the authority to act with respect to those matters listed in sections 3.01d.j.k.l. and m. of Department Organizational Order (DOO) 10-15 as they relate to the commissioned officers of NOAA. Please note the Secretary has reserved the authority to appoint and promote commissioned officers. The percentages target an AAS of 327 officers. Recommend approving the target AAS for planning with a 2% variance allowance per grade as attrition rates are unusually low. The grade percentage adjustments would allow upward mobility targeting increase in the O-3 and O-4 grades since the Coronavirus pandemic has affected the attrition rates in FY 2021.

Grade	Percentage Recommendation	Number of Officers
O-6	8%	26
O-5	14%	45
O-4	20%	66
O-3	22%	72
O-2	18%	59
O-1*	18%	59

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Approved Date Do Not Concur Date

- B. Zone Size and OOS. CPC recommends you approve the following zones and OOS for promotion to the next higher grade and authorize the OPB to not exceed the number of officers recommended for selection. In cases where the results contain a fraction, the zone size is rounded to the next higher number.

To Be Grade	Board Date (on or about)	Zone Size	OOS Percentage	Select	TIG by Board Date
O-6	April 20, 2021	10	60%	6	3.97
O-5	April 20, 2021	15	75%	11	3.87
O-4	April 20, 2021	9	80%	7	4.14
O-3	April 20, 2021	7	90%	6	1.78
O-2	April 20, 2021	16	100% (if qualified)	16	1.75

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- C. BOTC 138. CPC recommends you approve the selection of up to 10 primary candidates and up to 20 alternate candidates for BOTC 138.

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D. 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 23 waivers for time-in-grade to expand the zone of eligible candidates for promotion within the zones of captain, commander, and lieutenant. Captain is to increase from 4 eligible to 10 in zone, commander is to increase from 4 eligible to 15 in zone, and lieutenant is to increase from 1 eligible to 7 in zone.

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E. Board Schedule. CPC recommends approval of the following board schedule to hold the FY2021 promotion boards and for announcement to the officers in zone. Dates are approximate and may be adjusted so as not to impact the results of the FY2020 promotions.

Board Schedule	Board Date (on or about)
O-6 Selection	April 20, 2021
O-5 Selection	April 20, 2021
O-4 Selection	April 20, 2021
O-3 Selection	April 20, 2021
O-2 Selection	April 20, 2021

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F. Annual Review. CPC recommends performing an Annual Review of the lineal list in accordance with 33 U.S.C. § 3022.

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G. Inter-Service Transfers. CPC recommends approval to select up to five inter-service transfers with transfer dates in FY2021.

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Date

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H. Blended Retirement System Continuation Pay. CPC recommends approval of a 2.5x multiplier for Continuation Pay payout at 12 years for a commitment of 4 years.

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Approved

Date

Do Not Concur

Date