

## Questions: What is the assignment selection process? How do I prepare for assignment selection?

**Background:** The Commissioned Personnel Center (CPC) routinely receives inquiries from officers regarding the assignment process, and in particular, the criteria used by the Officer Assignment Board (OAB), Aviation Assignment Board (AAB) and Command Advisory Board (CAB) to determine which billets are to be filled and by whom. All officers are required to read and be familiar with NOAA Corps Directive (NCD) Chapter 5 – Assignments and Chapter 10 – Advisory Boards. These two chapters define the importance of billet descriptions, the assignment process, the roles of the Line Office Liaison Officers (Liaisons), and the role of the different assignment boards. Each Board is administered in adherence with the previously mentioned directives and the proceedings are kept confidential.

### Reference(s):

- [NOAA Corps Directive – Chapter 05 – Assignments](#)
- [NOAA Corps Directive – Chapter 10, Part 1, Section 10007– Officer Assignment Board](#)
- [Leadership Development Framework](#)

### Summary of the Assignment Process:

The assignment process involves a multitude of players including the individual officer, the billet chain of command, Line Office Liaisons, Center Commanding Officers, CPC, and the Director, NOAA Corps (Director). The goal of the assignment process is to meet the needs of the Service while balancing the professional development and personal preferences of individual officers; ultimately, placing the right officer in the right billet with as much advance notice as possible. Although officers can be reassigned at any time, CPC strives to focus such consideration on officers with less than 18 months remaining in their current assignment. The intent here is multifaceted. The organization is able to project accurate personnel needs, training schedules, and resource requirements into the coming years; additionally, the service member has increased ability to plan for their future Permanent Change of Station (PCS). This approach results in the service member and the NOAA Corps having fewer last minute changes.

The actual process of assigning an officer follows the guidance set forth in Chapter 5 of the NCD (currently under revision). The Director is the approving authority for all assignments. The Assignment Coordinator serves as the link between the Director, the Liaisons and Center Commanding Officers, and is responsible for the following.

- conducting strategic planning and analysis to provide Liaisons with a list of candidates who are seeking a billet or are otherwise suitable replacements for billets projected to become or are currently vacant
- advising Liaisons of impacts based on each of the choices presented
- providing assignment advice to officers and facilitating communication between the multiple parties involved in assignment discussions
- managing the billet list within the constraints of authorized numbers; and,
- briefing the Director on recommended assignments

Assignments for Lieutenants and below are recommended by respective line office liaisons through the Assignment Coordinator to the Director. Assignment recommendations stem from a combination of needs of the service and consideration of officer preferences. For Lieutenant Commander and above, assignments are made in consultation with and recommendations from the OAB or CAB. CPC staff will facilitate and advise members of the Board but do not serve as voting members. The Board's recommendations are then presented to the Director for final approval. In the event of immediate needs for reassignment, the Director has the authority to assign officers without convening a Board. After assignments have been approved, officers are notified with a Forthcoming Assignment Notification via email, the officer's record is updated to reflect the next assignment, and the Approved Assignments are posted to the CPC website. Please note, officers have 45 days or 12 months (whichever is greater) from the date of the Forthcoming Notification to acknowledge receipt and acceptance of the assignment, or to submit a request for voluntary resignation/retirement in lieu of orders. Following acceptance of the orders, the officer will work with the Officer Personnel Management Division throughout the remainder of the PCS process.

## **Information and Practices in Preparation for the Assignment Selection Process:**

- Be proactive in your career at every step.
- Update assignment preferences after settling into new billets and at least annually thereafter.
  - NOTE: The billet list and assignment of officers is a dynamic process and can change based upon the needs of the Service. Monitor the billets of interest to you even if the timing does not quite sync with your rotation schedule.
- Officers are always under consideration for reassignment. The more specific you are with assignment preferences, the more accurately the Assignment Coordinator can provide information to the Liaisons and the Boards.
- Seek advice and counsel from the Officer Career Management Division (OCMD) and engage a mentor in the fields you hope to pursue. OCMD will provide advice and recommend potential assignments based on the needs of the Service, while balancing the preferences and professional development of the officer.
- Speak to the officer currently assigned in the billet to gain a peer's perspective on the assignment.
- Talk to the chain of command for the billet.
- Contact the appropriate Liaison for the billet/assignment in which you are interested.
  - For Lieutenant and below, Liaisons make recommendations for assignments after consultation with the programs and coordination with the Assignment Coordinator.
  - For Lieutenant Commander and Commander assignments, the Liaison functions as an advocate for the programs they represent. Ultimately, the OAB will make a recommendation based on the previously mentioned criteria and in the best interest of the Service.
- Commanding Officer (CO) and Executive Officer (XO) ship assignments are planned 18 -24 months in advance and recommendations are made by a Command Advisory Board (CAB). The CAB is comprised of Marine Operations Center Commanding Officers, the Marine Operations Director, and Line Office Liaisons. CAB's are held twice each year, or as needed. NOTE: CO and XO assignments may be changed outside of this process to meet the needs of the Service.
- For the aviation specific billets, working with the AOC chain of command will provide the most consistent avenue to find the best suited operational assignments throughout an officer's career.

Additionally, AAB's to select active NOAA Corps Officers for initial flight training meet in early December, or as needed. Note: Officers interested in the initial flight training billets are encouraged to start the medical screening process well in advance of an AAB. An approved aviation medical screening is good for one year and provides officers aboard ships the flexibility to apply whenever the call for applicants is made. AAB's for the heavy aircraft training billets are held on an as needed basis.

## Basic Steps at All Levels:

1. **Plan for the Future.** It is never too early to prepare for the next step in your career development. Look at the billet list from a realistic standpoint. Find billets that will continuously challenge you, and proactively work with your supervisory chain, Liaisons, and the Assignment Coordinator to help make those plans work not just for yourself, but for the organization as a whole.
2. **Update your Assignment Preferences.** Preferences are provided to the Boards and Liaisons every month to help make recommendations for billets that need to be filled.
3. **Update your Billet Description.** Officers interested in your assignment will be looking at your billet description. It is the responsibility of each officer to ensure their respective billet description accurately reflects the assignment and the most current version is approved and posted to the website
4. **Talk to the Assignment Coordinator.** The goal of the Assignment Coordinator is to get the right people to the right billets and ensure the process is equitable and transparent. If your intentions are known, it is easier to get you in contact with the appropriate Liaison and Center CO's to find the best assignment for you and the organization. OCMD serves as your advocate for continual professional development.
5. **Communicate with the Programs and Liaisons.** The Assignment Coordinator is available to help facilitate the process. The Liaisons and Center Commanding Officers are the voting members of the Boards who provide assignment recommendations to the Director.

## Checklist:

- Update billet preferences after signing into your new billet and annually thereafter.
- Contact the Officer Career Management Division for career counseling and assignment advice.
- Contact the Assignment Coordinator to discuss upcoming assignments within 18 months of your planned rotation date.
- Coordinate with the Liaisons and Chains of Command regarding prospective billets in which you have interest.
- Following receipt of a Forthcoming Assignment Notification (orders), Submit a Travel Request (NOAA Form 56-26) to CPC 120 days prior to your planned detachment date.
- Coordinate PCS through Officer Personnel Management Division.
- Stay motivated and hit the deck plates running!

## CPC Point(s) of Contact:

- Assignment Selection Process - Officer Career Management Division – [Assignment.Branch@noaa.gov](mailto:Assignment.Branch@noaa.gov)
- Career Management, Officer Evaluation System, and Training - Officer Career Management Division – [chief.careermgmt.cpc@noaa.gov](mailto:chief.careermgmt.cpc@noaa.gov)
- PCS Coordination - Officer Personnel Management Division – [pcs.cpc@noaa.gov](mailto:pcs.cpc@noaa.gov)