

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) 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 OAB. The OAB proceedings remain confidential; however, the rules and processes followed are defined and remain in adherence with these NCDs.

Reference(s):

- [NOAA Corps Directive – Chapter 5 – 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 echelons which include individual officers, chains of command, Liaisons, Center Commanding Officers, CPC, and the Director, NOAA Corps (Director, NC). The goal of the assignment process is to meet the needs of the Service. In achieving this goal, CPC also looks to balance the professional development and personal preferences of individual officers; thereby, placing the right officer in the right billet with as much advanced 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 behind this planning and assigning is twofold. First, the organization is able to project accurate personnel needs, training schedules, and resource requirements into the coming years; and second, the service member has increased stability and ability to plan for their future Permanent Change of Station (PCS).

The actual process of assigning an officer follows the guidance set forth in Chapter 5 of the NCD. The Director is the approving authority for all billets and assignments. The Assignment Coordinator serves as the link between the officers, CPC, the Director, NC, 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 that will 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 echelons 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 the Assignment Coordinator to the Director, NC in coordination with the many echelons. For Lieutenant Commander and above, assignments are

made in consultation with and recommendations from the OAB. The process at this level is more competitive. CPC facilitates and advises members of the OAB, but serves as non-voting members. When the OAB convenes, members vote on candidates for a billet. The Board's recommendations are then presented by CPC to the Director, NC for approval, disapproval or hold decisions. In the event of immediate needs for reassignment, the Director, NC assigns officers without convening an OAB. These decisions are briefed to the OAB by the Assignment Coordinator so members are aware of any changes in personnel since the last meeting. Once assignments have been approved, officers are notified with a Forthcoming Assignment notification. Once the forthcoming notification is sent, the Officer Personnel Management Division becomes the principal point of contact throughout the remainder of the PCS process.

Information and Practices in Preparation for the Assignment Selection Process:

- Be proactive in your career.
- Update your assignment preferences annually.
 - NOTE: The billet list and assignment of officers are dynamic, 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.
- You 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 OAB.
- Seek advice and counsel from the Officer Career Management Division (OCMD), and a mentor in the fields you hope to pursue. The OCMD will provide advice and recommend potential assignments based on the needs of the Service, while seeking to balance the preferences and professional development of the officer.
- Speak to the officer currently assigned in the billet you seek 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. The OAB will make a recommendation based on the needs of the Service.
- Commanding Officer (CO) and Executive Officer (XO) ship assignments are planned 18 months to two years in advance as recommended by the Command Advisory Working Group, Marine Operations Center leadership and the Liaisons, who look at the fleet as a whole. This process occurs in March-April each year. NOTE: Due to workforce dynamics, CO and XO assignments must sometimes be changed outside of this process to meet the needs of the Service.
- For the aviation community, working with the chain of command at AOC provides the most consistent avenue for developing the operational assignments needed throughout an officer's career.
- Captain assignments are above the OAB coordinated by CPC with the Director, NC.

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.** The preferences are provided to the OAB monthly, so recommendations can be made for billets that need to be filled.
3. **Update your Billet Description.** As much as you should be looking to the future, remember your replacement will be looking at your billet description. Make sure it is accurate and updated annually.
4. **Talk to the Assignment Coordinator.** The goal of the Assignment Coordinator is to meet the needs of the Service by getting the right people to the right place. If your intentions are known, it is easier to get you in contact with the appropriate Liaison to find the best assignment for you and the organization. CPC serves as your advocate for professional development.
5. **Communicate with the Programs and Liaisons.** The Assignment Coordinator is the facilitator of this process. The Liaisons and Center Commanding Officers are the voting members of the OAB and provide recommendations to the Director, NC. As a whole, we are your strongest advocates.

Checklist:

- ☐ Update assignment preferences annually.
- ☐ Contact the OCMD for career counseling and assignment advice.
- ☐ At 18 months from your rotation date contact the Assignment Coordinator to discuss upcoming assignments.
- ☐ Coordinate with the Liaisons and Chains of Command regarding prospective billets in which you have interest.
- ☐ Submit a Travel Request (NOAA Form 56-26) to CPC 120 days prior to your planned detachment date.
- ☐ Coordinate PCS through the 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
- Career Management, Officer Evaluation System and Training - Officer Career Management Division – todd.a.bridgeman@noaa.gov
- PCS Coordination - Officer Personnel Management Division – Tracey.M.Peterson@noaa.gov

CPC Online Resources

- [Billet List](#)
- [Billet List Bar Graph](#)
- [Billet Descriptions](#)
- [Update Assignment Preferences – OPF Online](#)
- [List of Line Office Liaison Officers](#)