

# Highlights of Scientific Integrity Annual Activities

## Scientific Integrity Program Activities

### Scientific Integrity Committee

The Scientific Integrity Policy established a [Scientific Integrity Committee](#) (SIC), chaired by and composed of the Scientific Integrity Official (SIO) and senior officials (DSIOs), who represent each of the Agency's Program Offices and Regions. The Committee is responsible for promoting consistent implementation of the policy across the agency. The SIC meets quarterly. The participation of the Committee ensures that broad agency participation in SI. In fiscal year (FY) 2020, the Committee focused on a number of topics: the Committee Charter; the results of the Federal Managers Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA) statements; the results of the Employee Viewpoint Survey; the FY 2020 workplan; the Transparency Rule and its impact on scientific integrity; approaches to differing scientific opinions; training; comments on the OIG audit draft report; and timeline for response.

### Scientific Integrity Committee Charter

The Agency's [Scientific Integrity Committee Charter](#), completed in fiscal year (FY) 2020, clearly defines committee membership and the duties and responsibilities of its members.

#### Box 2. Scientific Integrity Committee Charter

##### Scientific Integrity Committee Charter

###### Roles and Responsibilities

- Leadership on scientific integrity
- Address Policy concerns, updates, and amendments
- Provide annual meeting and report on implementation
- Develop best practices for approval of scientific products and communications
- Oversee development and implementation of training

###### Member Roles and Responsibilities

- Certify compliance with the Policy
- Evaluate allegations
- Update and inform status of scientific integrity
- Prepare for and attend Committee meetings
- Communicate concerns or allegations from offices to Scientific Integrity Official (SIO)

###### Operations

- Committee meeting agendas developed by the SIO
- Committee meetings
- Committee Support
- Workgroups

## Scientific Integrity Committee Members

In fiscal year (FY) 2020, the Committee welcomed new members (Jim Payne, Jeanne Briskin, Tom Brennan, Wes Carpenter, Johanna Hunter, Bill Jenkins, Linda Anderson-Carnahan, and Andy Simons), returning member (CarolAnn Siciliano), and thanked outgoing member (Kevin DeBell) for their hard work on scientific integrity issues. The committee also expanded to include two additional representatives from the Office of Policy and the Office of Children's Health Protection.

The most up-to-date Committee member list can be found on the [Scientific Integrity home page](#). The complete list of FY 2020 Committee members can be found on the 2020 annual report home page.

## Scientific Integrity Outreach Activities

### Annual Agencywide Scientific Integrity Meeting

On June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020, there were over 1000 participants in the seventh annual agencywide scientific integrity meeting for EPA employees to learn about scientific integrity at EPA and ask questions. The participants represented all EPA program offices and regions. This was the first entirely virtual agencywide Scientific Integrity meeting.

Meeting Summary ([See Comprehensive List of Scientific Integrity Activities for a more complete summary](#))

- EPA's Associate Deputy Administrator, Doug Benevento, and Acting Science Advisor, Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta welcomed participants and discussed the strong culture of scientific integrity at EPA. EPA's Scientific Integrity Official, Francesca Grifo, described the responsibilities of the Scientific Integrity team and Scientific Integrity Committee, what they have done for EPA, and shared Scientific Integrity fiscal year (FY) 2019 highlights. Francesca Grifo discussed the types and status of scientific integrity allegations and advice that were received and updated on the scientific integrity 2018 survey results. The EPA Office of Inspector General's (OIG's) Whistleblower Protection Coordinator, Lori Ruk presented on whistleblower protections; and the National Hotline Manager, Kevin Collins discussed the process of seeking assistance with scientific integrity concerns. The OIG officials encouraged individuals to speak with scientific integrity entities—including Francesca Grifo, Deputy SI Officials, or the OIG Hotline—early about issues. The meeting concluded with a lively question and answer session.

### Scientific Integrity Award

In 2019, EPA launched an Award for Outstanding Achievement in Enhancing EPA's Culture of Scientific Integrity to recognize achievements that have significantly advanced the culture of scientific integrity at EPA. The Scientific Integrity Award provides an opportunity to celebrate exceptional accomplishments in implementing the Scientific Integrity Policy and enhancing the culture of scientific integrity at EPA. Nominees should have demonstrated exceptional resourcefulness, creativity, courage,

and/or commitment to effectively implementing the Scientific Integrity Policy and to enhancing the culture of scientific integrity at EPA.

#### 2020 Scientific Integrity Award Winner

- Carol Ann Siciliano was recognized for her dedication to enhancing the culture of scientific integrity at EPA. As a Deputy Scientific Integrity Official in multiple offices (separately in the OGC and OCSPP), Carol Ann educated staff on scientific integrity and worked tirelessly to implement the Scientific Integrity Policy.

#### Internal Outreach

- The Scientific Integrity Official's briefings to other EPA officials included political appointees and the new Inspector General. Program and regional offices engaged in a variety of activities to enhance the culture of scientific integrity across the Agency.

#### External Outreach

- The Scientific Integrity Official (Francesca Grifo) represented EPA to a variety of external government agency and non-governmental organizations. Non-governmental outreach from Francesca Grifo included attending the 2019 Annenberg Foundation Retreat, American Meteorological Society 2020 Conference, and the 2020 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Recommendation Meeting. External government outreach by Francesca Grifo included, but was not limited to, attending numerous meetings with the Office of Science and Technology Policy and Interagency Working Group along with delivering two briefings to the Office of Management and Budget to finalize the contracts clause.

## Scientific Integrity Training

### Scientific Integrity Mandatory Onboarding Training

Since January 2017, all new EPA employees have been required to take mandatory online scientific integrity training within six months of their onboarding. Onboarding training for new employees helps to establish personal commitments to scientific integrity, thus contributing to the overall culture of scientific integrity at EPA.

#### Status Updates on Training Completion

- In accordance with our commitment to improve tracking mandatory onboarding training, the Scientific Integrity Committee receives quarterly status updates on training completions, so they may follow up with their employees. Through FY2012 to the end of FY 2020, 71% or 1,564 of 2,204 EPA employees enrolled in the training course have successfully completed the onboarding training. Figure 1 below details the monthly completion of onboard scientific integrity training in FY 2020.

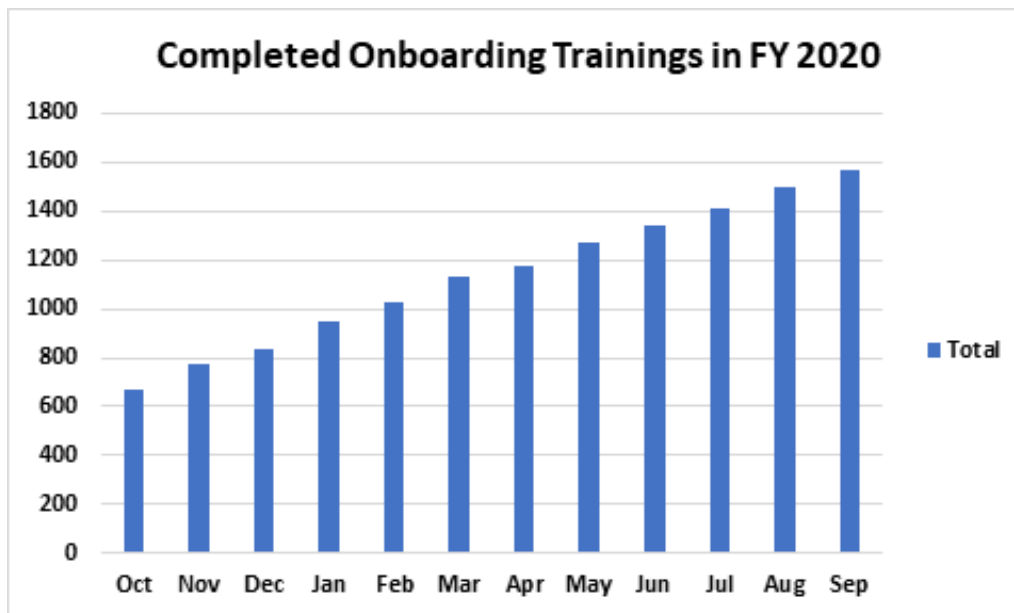


Figure 1: Completed Onboarding Trainings in FY 2020

### Scientific Integrity for Managers

Throughout fiscal year 2020, the SIO delivered an SI training module for managers. These were conducted at five different EPA locations. Additionally, Francesca Grifo was a guest speaker at the Virtual EPA New Career SES Orientation, where Senior Executive Service (SES) members were briefed on scientific integrity.

Along with the presentation, the managers, supervisors, and SES members were provided the Scientific Integrity Fact Sheet. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions and discuss experiences with scientific integrity.

## Scientific Integrity Activities Initiated Across Program Offices and Regions

Since 2013, EPA Assistant Administrators and Regional Administrators have been required to submit a certification of internal controls for scientific integrity by complying with the Federal Managers Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA). Based on the requirements that are outlined in the Scientific Integrity Policy, programs, offices, and regions are asked annually to report on their accomplishments, potential weaknesses, overall progress, and any need for assistance in implementing the Agency's Scientific Integrity Policy. An overview of the responses is reflected in this section. A listing of the fiscal year (FY) 2020 scientific integrity activities can be found in the [Appendix](#).

## Release of Scientific Information

One of the four areas for promoting scientific integrity that is outlined in EPA's Scientific Integrity Policy includes the Release of Scientific Information to the Public. Scientific research and analysis comprise the foundation of all major EPA policy decisions. Therefore, the Agency should maintain vigilance toward ensuring that scientific research and results are presented openly and with integrity, accuracy, timeliness, and the full public scrutiny demanded when developing sound, high-quality environmental science.

- The Office of Air and Radiation's Office of Atmospheric Program (OAP) completed and is now implementing an EPA's Lean Management System (ELMS) Project called the "OAP Journal Publication and Data Transparency Process." The project focuses on improving the system by which staff, who author a journal publication, can comply with the requirements for public access to data. The development of this ELMS project coincided with the Agency's recent implementation of these publication and data transparency and accessibility processes.
- The Office of Water (OW) invested in improved access to data, metadata, and web-based reporting of results and findings from National Aquatic Resource Surveys (NARS) water quality assessments. The OW has also made strides in making data and information more transparent through How's My Waterway. How's My Waterway allows users to navigate the wealth of data contained within OW, and this increased transparency continues to improve the data.
- In Region 3 during FY 2020, the Region 3 Office of Public Affairs worked closely with the Region 3 Air and Radiation Division in developing a communications plan and public messaging intended to help inform communities living near high priority Ethylene Oxide-emitting (EtO) facilities. In Region 3, those facilities are in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and West Virginia. This work is based on the results of a National Air Toxics Assessment identifying EtO as a potential health concern that may contribute to potential elevated cancer risks in certain census tracts.

## Safeguarding Scientific Integrity Across EPA Highlights

While policies, procedures, training, outreach, and technical and peer review are all vital to safeguarding scientific integrity across the Agency, leaders are taking additional steps to ensure a robust culture of scientific integrity in their program or regional offices. These efforts include leadership initiatives, hotlines, and anonymous suggestion boxes that are all intended to enhance the culture of scientific integrity in their offices.

- The Region 8 Science Council added six new members, expanding the Council's reach in building a culture of science and scientific integrity in the region. New members were briefed on the importance of scientific integrity. Two Council members were selected for management positions in fiscal year 2020, further expanding the reach of the Council and advancing the importance of scientific

integrity. Positions filled by Council members included the Water Quality Section Chief and the Deputy Division Director for Laboratory Services and Applied Sciences Division. The Council held an all-day retreat in March 2020. At this annual event, Council leadership reemphasized the importance of scientific integrity to our culture in Region 8, especially embracing diversity of thought and opinion.