

BOBBY JINDAL
GOVERNOR



SCOTT A. ANGELLE
SECRETARY

State of Louisiana
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
OFFICE OF COASTAL RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT

June 26, 2008

Ms. Susan Hill
P. O. Box 615
Brusly, LA 70719

RE: Letter of Counseling

Dear Ms. Hill:

You have been employed by the Coastal Resources Division of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources since April 26, 2004. You currently serve with permanent status in the classification of Coastal Resources Scientist Supervisor with responsibility for managing our Ecological Review Unit. This notice will serve as a formal Letter of Counseling for the reasons set forth below.

In your most recent performance evaluation, which was within the "Meets Requirements" category, I noted under the "Cooperativeness", "Adaptability" and "Communication" factors your need to more positively communicate and interact with your co-workers. I also noted a need for you to be more receptive to constructive criticism. I made these comments because you too frequently become defensive and respond to feedback in a negative manner which, on occasion, results in interactions becoming confrontational.

An example of your negative and confrontational approach in addressing issues occurred in your involvement with and interactions regarding the East Marsh Island project and the marsh elevation surveys related thereto. For several weeks, you and your staff have been addressing these surveys by involving a number of individuals whom we regularly work with within OCRM. In discussing your concerns related to this project with you on April 3, April 17 and again on May 1, 2008, you made disparaging comments regarding a number of your co-workers. During a teleconference on April 14, 2008, your comments distressed certain individuals who then complained to their supervisors. Along with Mr. Rhinehart and Ms. Smith, we discussed the survey elevation issue at length on May 1, 2008. This matter was further investigated by our Human Resources Division as a result of a complaint being filed through Mr. Lebas. As an example of the problems caused by your comments, Mr. Haywood, in an effort to preclude any further conflict, requested that your communications regarding the marsh elevations be directed solely to him and not directly to any of the Monitoring Section staff.

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As an example of your lack of cooperation, recall the request from our Planning Section to have the ER staff assist with six LCA projects. When I mentioned this to you on May 1, 2008, you repeatedly questioned the assignment and our need to assist the Planning Section. When I asked you to identify your staff's workload, you told me to review the Project Assignment Sheet. When I asked you to summarize the information thereon, you commented that I could do so myself. Later, after you met with the Planning Section to discuss the LCA projects, I was advised that you stated that the ER group was too busy for this assignment and the requested literature searches was something the ER group was not accustomed to doing.

During our meetings, your habit is to take copious notes of everything being said. In attempting to get down every word, you are not listening to what is being said. It also results in your being distracted from grasping the theme of the conversation, making you unable to engage in effective two-way communication. Although occasionally there may be a need to write down instructions or make notations regarding complex issues, I expect you to be fully focused throughout our meetings and discussions. This necessarily requires that you discontinue this excessive note-taking habit. I have discussed this concern with Ms. Smith and Mr. Rhinehart, who both agree that this practice is a problem and should be discontinued.

Since I was not present during the April 14, 2008 teleconference on the East Marsh Island project, I do not know precisely what occurred. Although the individuals questioned during our Human Resources Division's investigation of this teleconference provided differing insights and perspectives, everyone agreed that the discussion became confrontational. You claim that Mr. Darin Lee was abusive and yelling at you. If that occurred, the teleconference undoubtedly was counter-productive and only served to further negatively impact our working relationship with our co-workers within OCRM.

In the latter part of April, you forwarded directly to our Human Resources Division a request for optional pay for your subordinate, Ms. Green, purportedly because of her performance of additional duties. You should not have done so in this fashion. Instead, you should have discussed the issue with your chain of command, as has been the Restoration Technology Section's and the Coastal Restoration Division's procedure. The procedure for requesting optional pay is set forth in HR Policy No. 13. In discussing this issue with you on May 1, 2008, you stated that you were unaware of this policy. As a supervisor, you are charged with responsibility for knowing this Department's policies and procedures. Your claim to be unaware of HR Policy No. 13 is questionable since you last year requested optional pay for yourself responsive to a job offer. I raise this issue because of my concern that Ms. Green may have an expectation of receiving additional pay because of your unauthorized effort in her behalf. My understanding is that our Human Resources Division has determined that the additional duties performed by her fall within her job description, thus precluding any entitlement to optional pay.

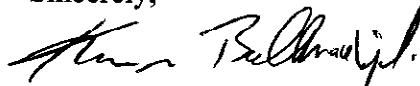
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I have taken the time to present this counseling notice to you because of the impending organizational changes associated with the creation of the CPRA. The Ecological Review Unit will be involved in this new program which will require continuing interaction with other OCRM staff and the DOTD employees assigned to this program. This cooperative endeavor needs to start off on the right foot. I am certain that we all will have disagreements and experience difficulty in transitioning to this new program. I have no problem with and expect spirited debate during the developmental stage of this program. However, I ask that you refrain from being confrontational. If problems develop, work through me as your supervisor in addressing issues. I do not expect to again have other supervisors report to me that their subordinates prefer to limit their interactions with you.

I ask that you evaluate the substance of this writing in the spirit in which it is intended. No one is out to harm you. You remain a valued employee. However, improvement must be demonstrated in the manner in which you interact with your co-workers, especially on issues which are unclear or subject to debate. Learn to present your concerns in a positive and constructive manner. Be receptive and open to others' differing opinions. Importantly, expect to receive feedback from me and others within your supervisory chain of command. We all can learn to be better employees and supervisors by accepting and being open to constructive criticism.

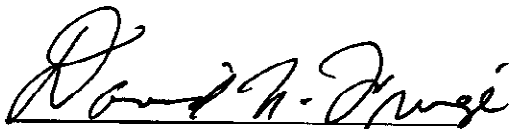
Pursuant to Civil Service Rule 12.9, you have the right to respond. Be assured that any response you may provide will remain attached to this Letter of Counseling. This is not a disciplinary action and will not be placed in your personnel file.

Sincerely,



Karim Belhadjali
Coastal Resources Scientist Manager

APPROVED:



David W. Fruge