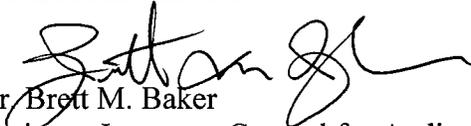




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Office of Inspector General
Washington, D.C. 20230

September 29, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Jane Lubchenco
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and
NOAA Administrator

FROM: 
Dr. Brett M. Baker
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

SUBJECT: Review of U.S. Historical Climatology Network's Data Quality
and Modernization Efforts (OAE-19846)

The Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General is preparing to conduct a review of the U.S. Historical Climatology Network (USHCN) as a result of a congressional inquiry on the reliability of the network's data.

Our objectives are to determine

- whether NOAA's USHCN modernization efforts will address siting and maintenance problems with its current USHCN sites;
- whether users of the data understand the data quality issues and have concerns surrounding the data;
- what, if any, mitigating steps NOAA has taken to address any deficiencies in the data; and
- the effectiveness of those mitigating steps.

We will interview staff within the National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service and other NOAA units associated with the USHCN to help us complete our objectives. We have also attached to this memo a list of documents we will need for our review.

As a first step, we will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. In the meantime, if you have questions regarding this review, please contact me at (202) 482-2600, or David Sheppard, Regional Inspector General for Audits in Seattle, at (206) 220-7970.

cc: Mary Kicza, Assistant Administrator, National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service
Dr. Rick Spinrad, Assistant Administrator, Oceanic and Atmospheric Research
Dr. Jack Hayes, Assistant Administrator, National Weather Service
Mack Cato, director, NOAA Audit Control and Information Management Office

List of Documents

The following is a list of documents we will need access to for our review. We will likely request additional materials as the review progresses.

1. A complete list of all USHCN-2 sites
2. The most recent USHCN-2 siting and maintenance guidelines
3. A complete maintenance record for USHCN-2
4. An organizational chart identifying all personnel involved with managing the USHCN-2 and their respective responsibilities
5. A detailed description of the processes used to adjust the raw data from the USHCN-2, including a flowchart of the data adjustment process
6. The modernization plans for the USHCN
7. A listing of all USHCN-m sites
8. An organizational chart identifying all personnel involved with managing the USHCN-m and their respective responsibilities
9. The current USHCN-m siting and maintenance guidelines
10. A list of government and non-government reports or studies regarding the network (those that you are of)