

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	NOAA Administrative Order 200-3B	
NOAA ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER SERIES	DATE OF ISSUANCE	EFFECTIVE DATE
SUBJECT The NOAA Administrative Order Series		

**SECTION 1. PURPOSE.**

.01 This Order describes the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Administrative Order (NAO) series, establishes policy, and assigns responsibilities for the series' management and operation.

.02 The purpose of this Order focuses primarily on policies and responsibilities; establishes the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations (DUSO) as the NOAA official responsible for determining outcome of irreconcilable differences in proposed NAOs; prescribes additional responsibilities of the originating offices for NOAA handbooks and manuals; establishes the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (OCAO) as the organization responsible for administrative aspects of the NAO series; adds a requirement for certification of each NAO's accuracy and completeness every 3 years or during senior leadership transition; and eliminates the requirement for formal clearance with Departmental offices and replaces it with a recommendation that originating offices conduct informal counterpart clearance.

**SECTION 2. SCOPE.**

.01 The NAO series covers substantive program matters and administrative management policy, responsibilities, and requirements for such administrative subjects as budget, travel, personnel, and procurement. The series covers administrative subject matter of a continuing nature applicable NOAA-wide or to two or more Line/Staff Offices. The NAO series also may be used to address certain program matters applicable to two or more Line/Staff Offices.

**SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS.**

.01 An NAO is a durable intra-agency directive that remains effective until superseded or cancelled by an appropriate action. NAOs cover substantive program matters and administrative management policies, procedures, requirements, and responsibilities applicable to two or more organizations. In many instances, NAOs provide NOAA-specific guidance supplementing the administrative policies and procedures issued in the Department Administrative Order (DAO) series.

#### **SECTION 4. POLICY.**

.01 NAOs are used to document and mandate continuing policies, standards, requirements, and procedures prescribed by the Under Secretary for department wide application or for application to two or more major program areas of the department.

#### **SECTION 5. RESPONSIBILITIES.**

.01 The Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere (UNSEC) shall sign all NAOs dealing with authorities vested in UNSEC that have not been delegated to the appropriate Line/Staff Office and other NAOs which the NOAA Chief Administrative Officer forwards for signature.

.02 The Deputy Under Secretary for Operations (DUSO) is the key advisor to UNSEC on program and policy issues including NAOs and shall resolve irreconcilable differences between Line/Staff Offices concerning the NAO series.

.03 General Counsel (GC) serves as chief legal officer and policy advisor to UNSEC for all NOAA activities and reviews all NAOs, handbooks, guides, and manuals prior to submission.

.04 NOAA Executive Secretariat (NOAA EXEC SEC) serves as primary coordinator of NAO clearance documents through the executive correspondence tracking system for UNSEC signature.

.05 The NOAA Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (OCAO) shall:

- a. establish and coordinate the overall operation of the NAO series;
- b. control and assign subject classification numbers for NAOs;
- c. plan, establish, and maintain an internal control system for the formal clearance and issuance of NAOs;
- d. establish and apply U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) Style Manual editorial standards and protocols for format and appearance;
- e. advise NOAA Line/Staff Offices on NAO content and supplementary policies;
- f. advise the NOAA Chief Administrative Officer of serious violations and/or consistent patterns of noncompliance with applicable guidelines and policies for the NAO series;
- g. maintain the official historical master files for NAOs, related NOAA handbooks and manual issuances; and

h. maintain the NAO website.

.06 The NOAA Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) shall sign all other NAOs and either directly or indirectly through staff:

- a. serve as primary coordinator between NOAA Line/Staff Offices and NOAA EXEC SEC for all NAO issues;
- b. submit final authoritative signatures from all NOAA Line/Staff Offices to NOAA EXEC SEC on all applicable NAO matters;
- c. take appropriate measures to promote and maintain compliance with the policies prescribed in this Order; and
- d. develop procedures and protocols applicable to the series.

.07 Heads of NOAA Line Offices and Staff Offices shall:

- a. concur on proposed program NAOs, revisions, and revocations developed by their respective organizations, and on their respective organization's proposed establishment, revocation, or potentially controversial revisions to its authorized NOAA handbook and/or manual issuances;
- b. designate a point of contact (POC) in the NOAA Line/Staff Office to serve as liaison for all NAO matters;
- c. elevate to the DUSO, clearance issues involving the Office's NAOs or NOAA handbook and manual issuances on which concurrence cannot be obtained from another Office during the informal clearance process; and
- d. submit NAOs and all necessary clearance forms to OCAO for executive clearance.

.08 The NOAA Labor Relations Officer (LRO): Conducts a union review to determine if the applicable NAO subject matter is appropriate under applicable collective bargaining units.

.09 The Office of Primary Interest (OPI) also referred to as the "originating NOAA Line/Staff Office" within this Order, is the organization responsible for preparing and maintaining the program NAO and having the expertise to answer questions regarding its provisions or subject matter. When warranted, two organizations having significant responsibilities for a single NAO may both be listed as OPI. The OPI shall:

- a. consult with OCAO on the proper procedures for initiating NAO clearance;
- b. develop and maintain clear, current, and accurate program NAOs covering appropriate administrative or programmatic subject matter applicable to two or more Line and/or Staff Offices;

- c. review the content of their NAOs for accuracy and completeness every 3 years, during senior leadership transition, or as otherwise scheduled by the CAO, and either initiate appropriate revisions or provide confirmation to OCAO that the material remains current;
- d. provide internal organizations, including NOAA headquarters, field elements, and the appropriate Line/Staff Office representative from the NOAA Office of General Counsel with the opportunity to review and comment during the developmental stages of the Office's NAOs;
- e. conduct informal clearance with external Line/Staff Offices, other headquarters organizations, and unions that may be significantly impacted by proposed additions, revisions, or revocations to the NAO series, ensure that all substantive issues have been addressed, and obtain concurrence from organizations prior to submitting the document for formal clearance;
- f. consider and, as appropriate, conduct informal clearance with counterpart organization(s) within the Department of Commerce (a request for "courtesy review" may be an alternative to informal clearance); and
- g. comply with additional requirements in Section 6.03 of this Order concerning NOAA handbooks and manuals, including that for issuance of an authorizing NAO for the handbook/manual.

## **SECTION 6. GENERAL.**

.01 NAO Website. OCAO will maintain a website comprising electronic versions of all active NAOs. NOAA handbooks and manuals also will be identified and, as available, accessible through the NAO website.

.02 Identification of Updates. Recent additions, revisions, and revocations to the NAO series will be identified and highlighted on the NAO website.

.03 NOAA Handbooks and Manuals.

- a. NOAA handbooks and manuals containing policy or procedures are elements of the NAO series providing in-depth coverage of those subjects so complex or extensive as to benefit from coverage in the form of a handbook or manual. NOAA handbooks and manuals cover specialized administrative requirements in areas such as travel management, procurement, budgeting, and finance. NOAA handbooks and manuals establishing policy and responsibilities shall be authorized by an NAO and shall have the same force and effect as that NAO. The authorizing NAO shall specify OPI, which, for purposes of NOAA handbooks and manuals, is the organization responsible for preparing, clearing, issuing, and maintaining the handbook or manual. Additional guidance on the content and subject matter to be covered in the authorizing NAO and the procedural aspects associated with NOAA handbooks and manuals are available from OCAO.

- b. The OPI for each NOAA handbook or manual is responsible for:
  - i. determining and providing for the method of issuance (i.e., hard-copy and/or electronic “html” format);
  - ii. assessing security and other access issues and implementing any necessary controls;
  - iii. providing to OCAO appropriate information for accessing the NOAA handbook or manual through the NAO website; and
  - iv. maintaining the official historical files in accordance with the NOAA Records Disposition Handbook’s Item 100-3a., Official Record Set, and Item 3c., Working papers and background materials.

## **SECTION 7. STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES.**

.01 NAOs must have uniformity of format and presentation, in addition to being complete, clear, technically accurate, and consistent with law and regulation. OCAO has developed detailed guidance on formatting instructions, the basic structure, and other subjects associated with preparing NAOs. Originating offices should consult with OCAO to obtain the current guidance information when considering new, revision, or revocation to the NAO and if any other assistance is needed.

## **SECTION 8. CLEARANCE PROCESS.**

.01 Informal Clearance. The OPI shall conduct informal clearance with headquarters organizations, NOAA Line/Staff Offices, and unions that may be significantly impacted by the proposed NAO documents. Evidence of concurrence and approval from reviewers who have provided substantive comments must be documented through the NOAA Transmittal Memorandum. Substantive comments expressed during the informal clearance process must be incorporated, accommodated, or otherwise reconciled prior to the document’s entry into formal clearance. In addition:

- a. originators should start with conducting informal clearance with the appropriate counterpart organization(s) within the Department of Commerce (a request for “courtesy review” may be an alternative to informal clearance). Appropriate modifications should be made to the draft; however, because there is no requirement for counterpart review in NOAA’s or the Department's Directives System, the originator has greater latitude in determining whether to seek review by, or to accept input from, the counterpart;

- b. the proposed NAO must be provided to the appropriate NOAA Line/Staff Office GC representative for review, and concurrence prior to the document's entry into formal clearance; and
- c. after all substantive issues have been resolved, the originator shall prepare the NAO, exhibits, appendices, attachments, and appropriate formal clearance documents in "final draft" form.

.02 Formal Clearance. Once informal clearance is complete. The OPI shall transmit all necessary clearance documents to OCAO for required format, grammar and protocol review. OCAO will advise the OPI of its evaluation, including indication of potential problems with subject matter coverage. OCAO will then prepare the clearance package containing all appropriate material for both CAO and NOAA executive official clearances. Once the CAO clears the NAO package, OCAO will forward the clearance package to NOAA EXEC SEC using the current executive correspondence tracking system. NOAA EXEC SEC will then forward and monitor progress of all remaining executive official clearances. Once executive official clearances are obtained, all originals are sent (through NOAA EXEC SEC) back to OCAO.

## **SECTION 9. ISSUANCE.**

.01 Upon receipt of an approved NAO, OCAO will issue the Order electronically by posting to the NAO website and filing into the NAO file management system maintained by OCAO.

.02 A signed copy from OCAO will be sent back to the appropriate OPI who will distribute to all applicable NOAA Line/Staff Offices.

## **SECTION 10. REFERENCES.**

.01 Existing documents referenced in this policy are as follows:

- a. U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual, 2008.  
<http://www.gpo.gov/>

## **SECTION 11. EFFECT ON OTHER ISSUANCES.**

.01 This Order supersedes NAO 200-3, dated August 27, 2008.

.02 NOAA UNSEC signs because there is no delegation of authority for this NAO.

An electronic copy of this Order will be posted in place of the superseded Order on the NOAA Office of the Chief Administrative Officer website under the NOAA Administrative Issuances Section (<https://www.noaa.gov/organization/administration/administrative-issuances>).



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Under Secretary of Commerce  
for Oceans and Atmosphere

Office of Primary Interest:  
Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment:  
NOAA Delegations of Authority & Administrative Order Guidance