

***NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE INSTRUCTION 31-105-01***  
***June 2002***

***Financial Management and Budget  
Correspondence***

***CORRESPONDENCE ASSISTANCE***

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***SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: Text updated to reflect current procedures.***

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

[Approving Authority name]

Date

[Approving Authority title]

## **Role of the Correspondence Unit**

This statement governs the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC) correspondence. This correspondence is prepared for the signature of the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, the Deputy Assistant Secretary, NOAA General Counsel, the Deputy Secretary of Commerce, and the Secretary of Commerce.

The Correspondence Unit (CU) in the NMFS Office of Management and Budget, Management and Administration Division, is the focal point for all correspondence prepared in NMFS. The Unit also tracks reports to Congress, memoranda to NMFS Regions and Science Centers, FOIAs, Agreements that will be cleared by DOC General Counsel, memos to NOAA and DOC officials, *Federal Register* packages, Issues-Advisories, etc.

CU will review all incoming correspondence and direct it to a Program office for action or information purposes. CU will assign the action, determine the due date, and prepare a CU control sheet. CU will make the assignments using the WebCIMS correspondence tracking program. The Program Office, which has access to the WebCIMS program, will receive an email notification that there is an assignment, and CU will also prepare a paper folder with the control sheet and the incoming correspondence.

An “**A-Priority**” is an action controlled by the Department of Commerce for the signature of the Deputy Secretary or the Secretary of Commerce. When a Program Office receives an “A-Priority,” there are few if any higher priorities. A-Priorities have a 2-day due date. In those 2 days, the reply and two transmittal memoranda must be prepared, cleared by General Counsel/Fisheries, and the transmittal memorandum from the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries (AA) to the Under Secretary must be signed. Until the transmittal memorandum addressed to NOAA is signed by the AA, the Program Office will ensure that the focal person for the document is available to answer questions and to make changes or additions to the document.

CU will monitor the due dates, remind Program Offices before an action is due, follow up on overdue actions, and report the status of correspondence to the Deputy Assistant Administrator on a weekly basis. In the case of A Priorities, this may occur daily.

CU will review all documents prepared for the signature of the AA, NOAA and DOC officials and enter them into the WebCIMS tracking program. This includes all documents, not just controlled correspondence. CU will review the documents to ensure compliance with all NMFS/NOAA/DOC procedures.

CU is responsible for the electronic transmission to NOAA of all NOAA/DOC documents. CU will retain paper and electronic files of documents until a signed copy is received. Then the file will be returned to the Program Office. CU will retain paper copies of documents for 3 years, and an electronic copy of scanned signed documents is always available to any WebCIMS user.

Further details and sample documents are available on the NMFS Intranet, under “Controlled Correspondence.”