

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

Request, Review, Approval, Routing and Disposition of Employee-Initiated Remote Work Agreements

1. Introduction and Background.

Department of the Interior (DOI) Personnel Bulletin (PB) 20-06, Remote Work Policy, dated July 23, 2021, became effective August 23, 2021. PB 20-06 requires bureaus to establish written procedures prior to approving employee-initiated remote work requests and implementing remote work arrangements consistent with the guidelines and requirements established in the PB. Reclamation Manual HRM 11-04, Remote Work, including appendices, established the requirements for proper and consistent implementation of remote work throughout the Bureau of Reclamation. In December 2021, Reclamation issued instructions for a remote work request process and approval to the Deputy Commissioner. On December 15, 2022, the Human Capital Officer (HCO) revised the requirement for remote work requests to the proper Reclamation Leadership Team member or designee via memorandum.

Effective July 27, 2023, the Department of the Interior amended, via memorandum, PB 20-06 approval procedures for all employee-initiated requests, all annual reviews of employee-initiated requests and all new job opportunity announcements for remote work. The Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science (PDASWS), Exercising the Delegated Authority of the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science is delegated approval authority for all remote work requests, this authority cannot be further delegated. Remote work requests will be approved in accordance with the eligibility criteria described in PB 20-06 and HRM 11-04. Departmental Remote Work Policy Update memorandum issued September 19, 2023, clarified filling remote positions does not require Assistant Secretary approval if the request is within the regional current level/percentage.

2. Purpose and Scope.

These instructions outline Reclamation's procedures, in accordance with HRM 11-04 including appendices, for the request, review, routing and disposition of employee-initiated requests for a new employee requested remote work agreement (including change to an existing remote duty location); annual recertification of remote work agreements and to request an exception to the regional remote current level/percentage as reported to the Office of Human Capital on October 8, 2023 to fill a remote designated position. These instructions do not apply to employees hired as a remote worker.

3. Exceptions

Certain categories of remote work agreements, such as term/temporary appointments or as a part of a Reasonable Accommodation are excepted from the approved remote percentage and are not required to be approved at the PDASWS level.

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If additional exception categories are approved, the HCO will inform SHROs of these categories. The Regional Servicing Human Resources Offices (SHROs) will develop an approval/recertification process to the appropriate Reclamation Leadership Team member or designee while continuing to follow HRM 11-04. If approved, exceptions must be noted on the Bureau/Office Quarterly Remote Work submission, along with the approval date.

4. Requirements

Request, Review and Routing:

A. Request for New Remote Agreement

- (1) The employee completes a Remote Work Request (Appendix A) and sends the request to their first-line supervisor. If remote work is a Reasonable Accommodation (RA) request, contact the SHRO
- (2) For all new requests and changes to city, state, duty station, or locality pay area, the supervisor evaluates the employee's eligibility and the position suitability for remote work using Remote Work Evaluation (Appendix B) (Note: document may need to be downloaded to open). Each section must be completed in detail and evaluated independently. The supervisor must answer "yes" in both signatory sections of Appendix B to approve the remote work request. If denied, supervisor must communicate the denial within 21 calendar days from request date. Decisions to deny a requested remote work arrangement should address the performance, conduct, or mission-related rationale for the decision
 - (a) SHROs will implement a local approval process for all Remote Work Requests that result in a change to address, city, state, or duty station, but no change in locality pay area.
 - (b) A change in locality pay area (increase or decrease) requires the PDASWS approval process.
- (3) If recommended for a new remote agreement the supervisor and employee will complete and sign a Remote Work Agreement (Appendix C) and complete the Remote Worksite Safety Checklist (Appendix D).
- (4) The supervisor will forward Appendices A-D to the Human Resource Officer (HRO) or designee.

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- (5) The HRO or designee will review the appendices for PB 20-06, section 7(A) and HRM 11-04 eligibility criteria compliance and cost analysis. HRO or designee will review Remote Work Evaluation (Appendix B), section F for compliance within the regional remote percentage or annotate remote percentage information, as applicable.
- (6) The HRO or designee will create a Data Tracking System (DTS) record for local level review and approval recommendation. NOTE: Step 4 requires HRO or designee to input remote data into Remote Request Data Intake. The following documents, at a minimum, will be included in DTS:
 - (a) Remote Work Request (Appendix A),
 - (b) Remote Work Evaluation (Appendix B),
 - (c) Remote Work Agreement (Appendix C) (requires Regional/Office Director or designee responsible for the remote percentage level to review and recommend approval signature),
 - (d) Remote Worksite Safety Checklist (Appendix D), and
 - (e) PDASWS Note to Reviewer (Attachment 1)
All documents must be password protected due to PII and the sensitive nature of the information. The HRO or designee will create one password per region and provide to HRPO and each person on the routing list.
 - (f) DTS routing: Regions may add their own internal routing, but the following routing, at a minimum, will be used.
 - (i) Human Resource Officer or designee (initial routing)
 - (ii) Human Resource Officer (HRO) (surname)
 - (iii) Regional/Office Director, or designee (signatory) (Appendix C)
 - (iv) Initiator or designee (action) (**Enter remote request data into Remote Request Data Intake**) (surname)
 - (v) HR Policy Office (HRPO) ER/LR Program Manager(s) (surname).
Surname after PDASWS review/approval process has concluded.

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- (vi) Initiator (close out and disposition)
- (7) Process for PDASWS review and approval of remote request(s).
 - (a) HRPO will pull bi-monthly data, the first and third Wednesday of each month, from the Remote Intake into a formatted remote request spreadsheet.
 - (b) HRPO will create a DTS for PDASWS review and approval with the following routing:
 - (i) HRPO, ER/LR (initial routing) Attach: Remote Spreadsheet and HCO Note to Reviewer.
 - (ii) Workforce Relations Manager (surname)
 - (iii) Human Capital Officer (surname)
Surname is approval recommendation for all requests on spreadsheet and as indicated on the Note to Reviewer. If not recommending approval of a request, remark to HRPO to update spreadsheet.
 - (iv) CODC-PAB (appropriate action)
 - (v) Deputy Commissioner, Policy, Administration and Budget (surname)
 - (vi) Deputy Commissioner, Operations (surname)
 - (vii) Chief of Staff (surname)
 - (viii) Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science (PDASWS), (surname)
Surname is approval of all requests on spreadsheet. If a request not approved, remark on spreadsheet or DTS.
 - (ix) HRPO, ER/LR (close out)
- (8) Processing and Communication of PDASWS approval.
 - (a) HRPO will access each regional local remote DTS record.
 - (b) HRPO will update Appendix C “Department of the Interior Level Approval” section.

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- (c) HRPO will upload new Appendix C version into local DTS.
- (d) HRPO will surname DTS record to signify remote request approval.

B. Request for Exception to Regional Remote Percentage Level, to fill a vacant position.

- (1) Supervisor or other management official completes Remote Work Evaluation (Appendix B) with vacant position information.
- (2) Supervisor or other management official forwards Appendix B to the Human Resource Officer (HRO) or designee.
- (3) HRO or designee will review Appendix B for PB 20-06, section 7(A) and HRM 11-04 eligibility criteria.
- (4) HRO or designee will review Remote Work Evaluation (Appendix B), section F for accurate regional remote percentage information or annotate section F with remote percentage data, as applicable.
- (5) HRO or designee will create a DTS with routing as outlined in section A(6)(f) above for local regional/directorate approval recommendation.
- (6) HRPO will process the DTS for the exception to regional remote percentage level to fill a vacant position request as noted in section A(7) above.
- (7) HRPO will surname the local DTS action as PDASWS approval of the exception to remote percentage level request to fill a vacant position.

C. Request for a Remote Agreement Annual Recertification (10 or more requests)

- (1) When a remote agreement is due for annual recertification, the supervisor will determine if a change has occurred since the previous approval (e.g., duties have changed, mission needs not being met, Departmental directives changed, misconduct has occurred etc.).
 - (a) **If no change has occurred** and the supervisor wants to approve to continue the remote work arrangement there is no requirement to redo Appendix A, B, or D.

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- (i) If supervisor is recommending recertification with no changes, Appendix C, Remote Work Agreement only must be completed and forwarded to the HRO or designee.
 - (ii) If a supervisor recommends denial of the recertification of the remote work agreement, the supervisor will communicate the denial to the employee and begin the process to return employee to worksite in accordance with procedures in PB 20-06 and HRM 11-04. Decisions to deny a requested remote work arrangement should address the mission-related rationale for the decision.
- (b) **If a change has occurred**, the supervisor must complete Remote Work Evaluation (Appendix B) to reevaluate the employee's eligibility and position suitability for recertification.
- (i) If supervisor recommends approval of the recertification of the remote work arrangement with change(s), Remote Work Agreement (Appendix C) and the Remote Work Evaluation (Appendix B), Remote Worksite Safety Checklist (Appendix D), if applicable, must be completed and forwarded to the HRO or designee.
 - (ii) If supervisor recommends denial of the recertification of the remote work agreement with changes that support the denial, the supervisor will communicate the denial to the employee and begin process to return employee to worksite in accordance with procedures in PB 20-06 and HRM 11-04. Decisions to deny a requested remote work arrangement should address the performance, conduct, or mission-related rationale for the decision.
- (2) The HRO or designee will review the appendices for each annual recertification request. The HRO or designee must verify a complete remote request package is on file and approved by the supervisor for each remote recertification request.
- (3) The HRO or designee will input the remote annual recertification information for each request into the Remote Request Data Intake and request HRPO pull a remote approval request spreadsheet or input each remote annual recertification information directly on the remote approval request spreadsheet (template provided by HRPO as needed).

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- (4) The HRO or designee will create one Data Tracking System (DTS) record, for the batch of annual recertifications recorded on the spreadsheet, for local regional review and approval recommendation. The following documents, at a minimum, will be included:
- (a) Remote Approval Request Spreadsheet.
 - (b) PDASWS Note to Reviewer with at least the following content:
“Per (PB) 20-06, Departmental Remote Work Policy and Reclamation Manual, HRM 11-04 attached are requests for REGION remote annual recertifications for review and approval. Each recertification request has the remote request package and supervisor approval verified and is recommended for approval by regional leadership. Request PDASWS approve the Remote Work Request.”
 - (c) Regions may add their own internal routing, but the following DTS routing, at a minimum, will be used.
 - (i) Human Resource Officer or designee (initial routing)
 - (ii) Human Resource Officer (HRO) (surname)
 - (iii) Regional/Office Director, or designee (signatory) (Appendix C)
 - (iv) HR Policy Office (HRPO) ER/LR Program Manager(s) (surname)
Surname after PDASWS review/approval process has concluded.
 - (v) Initiator (close out and disposition)
- (5) Process for PDASWS review and approval of remote request(s) recertification.
- (a) HRPO will create a DTS with the following routing:
 - (i) HRPO, ER/LR Program Manager(s) (initial routing)
Attach: Remote Spreadsheet and HCO Note to Reviewer.
 - (ii) Workforce Relations Manager (surname)
 - (iii) Human Capital Officer (surname)

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Surname is approval recommendation for all requests on spreadsheet and as indicated on the Note to Reviewer. If not recommending approval of a request, remark to HRPO to update spreadsheet.

- (iv) CODC-PAB (appropriate action)
- (v) Deputy Commissioner, Policy, Administration and Budget (surname)
- (vi) Deputy Commissioner, Operations (surname)
- (vii) Chief of Staff (surname)
- (viii) Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science (PDASWS), (surname)
Surname is approval of all requests on spreadsheet. If a request not approved, remark on spreadsheet or DTS.
- (ix) HRPO, ER/LR (close out)

- (6) Processing and communication of PDASWS approval.
 - (a) HRPO will access the region recertification DTS record.
 - (b) HRPO will surname the region DTS record as Assistant Secretary approval and advise SHRO of PDASWS approval DTS number.
 - (c) HRO or designee will send PDASWS approval DTS # to all recertification request supervisors to annotate each remote recertification Appendix C “Department of the Interior Level Approval” section.

5. Disposition.

- A. For a new approved employee remote work request, the SHRO will submit a FPPS personnel action to change the ‘Remote Agreement Type’ code to RW and update the employee’s official duty location to the remote work location, as applicable.
- B. For new remote work agreements with a change to duty station and locality pay area, the SHRO will submit a FPPS personnel action to change the employee’s official duty location to the new remote work location, as applicable.

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- C. For approved remote recertifications, SHRO will implement a process to track the new remote agreement effective date for annual review and recertification.
 - D. SHRO will provide a copy of the approved (or denied) Remote Work Agreement (Appendix C) to supervisor, who will communicate the decision to the employee.
 - E. For an approved exception to regional remote percentage level request to fill a vacant position, SHRO will provide a report of surname for DTS action as evidence of approval, if requested by staffing.
6. **Records Management.** SHRO will file the remote work documents in accordance with Reclamation official filing policies and retention schedules. If none, the SHRO will develop internal procedures to manage the remote work documents and will retain for at least the time the remote work agreement is effective.