Ohio Department of Natural Resources

MIKE DEWINE, GOVERNOR | MARY MERTZ, DIRECTOR

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
2019 DEC 26 PM 3:05

December 19, 2019

Randall Meyer
Ohio Inspector General
30 E. Broad Street, Suite 2940
Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: Report of Investigation 2018-CA00042

Dear Mr. Meyer,

In response to the Inspector General's October 24, 2019 Report of Investigation (2018-CA00042), I write to inform you that the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) has taken the following actions as recommended by the Inspector General:

1) With respect to the Division of Forestry employees named in the report who remain employed at ODNR, we are completing our administrative process to determine whether discipline is appropriate, in accordance with ODNR's progressive discipline policy. We have also provided these employees with additional in-person ethics training that covered the specific issues identified in your Report of Investigation.

2) On December 5, 2019 and again December 12, 2019, Deputy Legal Counsel Nicole Koppitch and I conducted seventy-five-minute-long in-person ethics trainings, which included a discussion on the appropriate use of state property and resources. These trainings were attended by Division of Forestry supervisors, managers, and other employees with access to ODNR's carpentry mills. This training was provided in addition to the standard yearly ethics trainings that all ODNR employees are required to complete.

3) On November 18, 2019, the Division of Forestry updated its internal policies to include a detailed Wood Products Inventory policy that tracks and inventories all wood products, including milled logs and dimensional lumber.

   In addition, on December 1, 2019, the Division of Forestry halted all production activities involving resale of products, production of items for internal uses, or production of promotional items at the Scioto Trail Carpentry Shop. This shutdown will allow the division to properly inventory all lumber in the carpentry shop and identify excess lumber for resale or disposal. Also, during this shutdown a committee will be formed to assess the production of finished wood products in the shop, and assess the equipment needed for the future activities. This committee will consist of division employees, two members of Ohio's Forestry Advisory Council, at least one forest products industry representative,

and one individual from another agency. The committee will examine the appropriate scope of products that the carpenter shop should produce, write a procedure for assessing production costs and analyzing cost effectiveness of producing items, and make recommendations on any existing equipment to sell or salvage. This information will be summarized in a report to the Chief. Our goal is to complete the lumber inventory and the committee report by March 1, 2020.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about these actions.

Thank you,

Damian W. Sikora
Chief Legal Counsel and Ethics Officer