

STATE OF OHIO
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

RANDALL J. MEYER, INSPECTOR GENERAL

**REPORT OF
INVESTIGATION**



**AGENCY: OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
FILE ID NO.: 2012-CA00107
DATE OF REPORT: NOVEMBER 7, 2013**

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General ... The State Watchdog

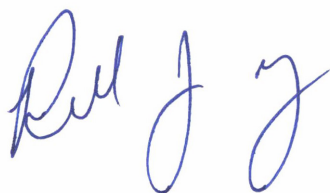
“Safeguarding integrity in state government”

The Ohio Office of the Inspector General is authorized by state law to investigate alleged wrongful acts or omissions committed by state officers or state employees involved in the management and operation of state agencies. We at the Inspector General’s Office recognize that the majority of state employees and public officials are hardworking, honest, and trustworthy individuals. However, we also believe that the responsibilities of this Office are critical in ensuring that state government and those doing or seeking to do business with the State of Ohio act with the highest of standards. It is the commitment of the Inspector General’s Office to fulfill its mission of safeguarding integrity in state government. We strive to restore trust in government by conducting impartial investigations in matters referred for investigation and offering objective conclusions based upon those investigations.

Statutory authority for conducting such investigations is defined in *Ohio Revised Code §121.41* through *121.50*. A *Report of Investigation* is issued based on the findings of the Office, and copies are delivered to the Governor of Ohio and the director of the agency subject to the investigation. At the discretion of the Inspector General, copies of the report may also be forwarded to law enforcement agencies or other state agencies responsible for investigating, auditing, reviewing, or evaluating the management and operation of state agencies. The *Report of Investigation* by the Ohio Inspector General is a public record under *Ohio Revised Code §149.43* and related sections of *Chapter 149*. It is available to the public for a fee that does not exceed the cost of reproducing and delivering the report.

The Office of the Inspector General does not serve as an advocate for either the complainant or the agency involved in a particular case. The role of the Office is to ensure that the process of investigating state agencies is conducted completely, fairly, and impartially. The Inspector General’s Office may or may not find wrongdoing associated with a particular investigation. However, the Office always reserves the right to make administrative recommendations for improving the operation of state government or referring a matter to the appropriate agency for review.

The Inspector General’s Office remains dedicated to the principle that no public servant, regardless of rank or position, is above the law, and the strength of our government is built on the solid character of the individuals who hold the public trust.



Randall J. Meyer
Ohio Inspector General



STATE OF OHIO

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

RANDALL J. MEYER, INSPECTOR GENERAL

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

FILE ID NUMBER:	2012-CA00107
SUBJECT NAME:	Bradford Dobney Jonathan Dobney
POSITION:	State Park Officer State Park Assistant Chief
AGENCY:	Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation
BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:	Anonymous Complaint
ALLEGATIONS:	Improper Hiring: Favoritism
INITIATED:	October 3, 2012
DATE OF REPORT:	November 7, 2013

INITIAL ALLEGATION AND COMPLAINT SUMMARY

On September 20, 2012, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General received an anonymous complaint listing four allegations involving two Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) employees – State Park Officer Bradford Dobney,¹ and his father, State Park Assistant Chief Jonathan Dobney. Both are employees of the Ohio Division of Parks and Recreation within ODNR. The complainant alleged:

- 1) Assistant Chief Dobney was involved in the hiring of his son.
- 2) A house owned by the Division of Parks and Recreation located at Quail Hollow State Park had previously sat empty and fell into disrepair. Shortly after the hiring of Bradford Dobney, the house was renovated and Dobney was permitted to lease the house. There was speculation that Dobney's father was involved in the decision to renovate the house and allow his son to reside in it.
- 3) With less than two years' experience as a Division of Parks and Recreation employee, Bradford Dobney was chosen to participate in a highly sought-after Manager in Training (MIT) program, and his father played a part in his selection.
- 4) Bradford Dobney has been seen writing a syndicated on-line sports column for Xavier University while on duty, using a state computer. It was alleged that Bradford Dobney and his brother are compensated for the blogs.

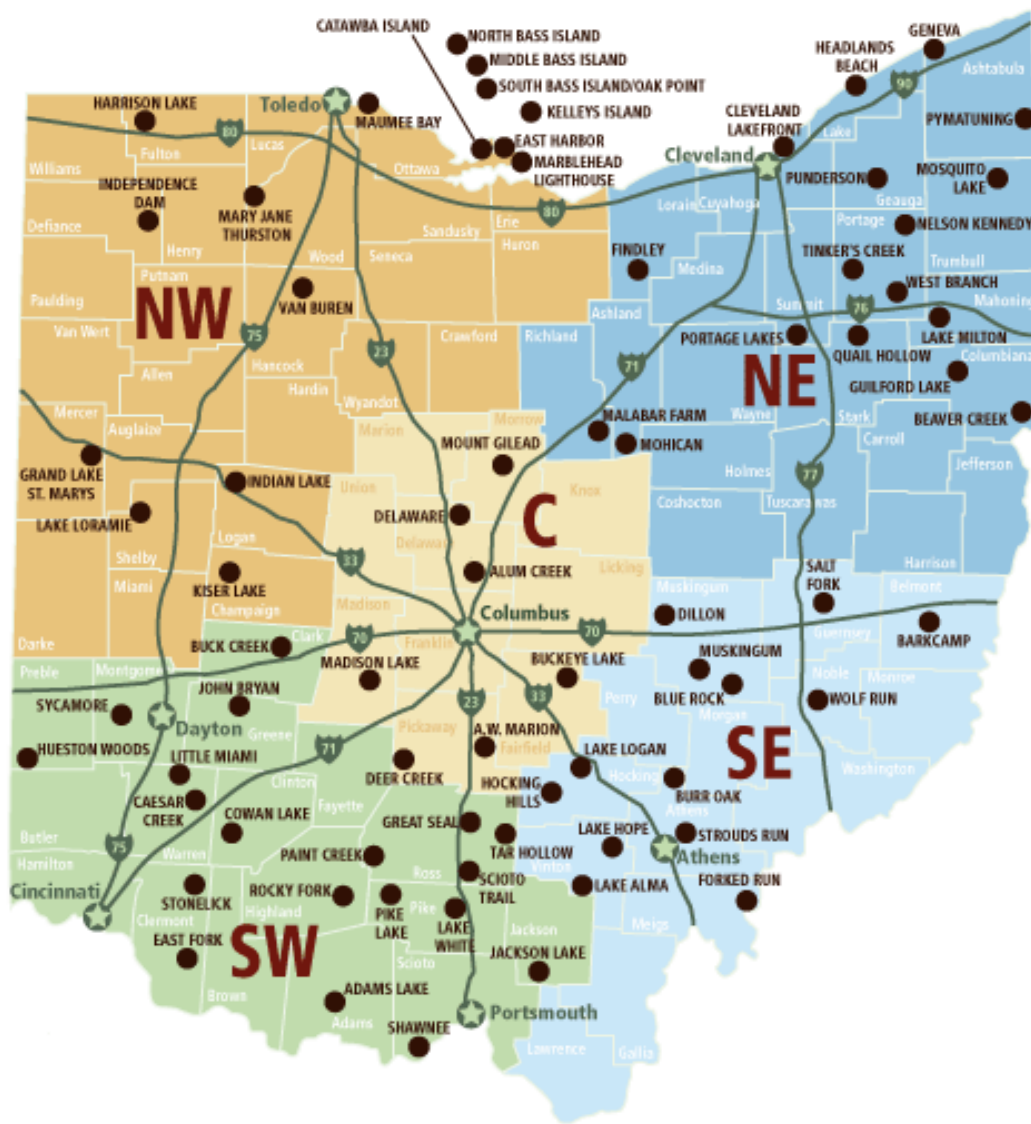
An investigation was opened on October 3, 2012. On October 16, 2012, and October 22, 2012, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General received additional complaints alleging Dobney was working on personal business during hours he was working for the state, and using state resources.

Bradford Dobney's employment was terminated by ODNR on February 15, 2013, due to unrelated violations.

¹ Bradford Dobney was also the subject of an Office of the Ohio Inspector General investigation issued February 15, 2013 (case number 2012-CA00069).

BACKGROUND

The Ohio Division of Parks and Recreation was created as a division of ODNR in 1949 with the statutory obligation to create, supervise, operate, and maintain a system of state parks and to promote their use by the public. Through land acquisitions and transfers, the park system has grown from the original 30 parks to 75 state parks in 60 counties with over 174,000 acres of land and water resources. Facilities include eight resort lodges, two dining lodges, six golf courses, more than 9,000 campsites in 56 family campgrounds, 518 cottages, 36 visitor/nature centers, 80 swimming beaches and 18 swimming pools, 188 boat ramps and 7,583 boat docks, 463 picnic areas, and 1,167 miles of trails.



Ohio State Parks host about 55 million visitors each year. The division's primary purpose is to provide front-line service to these customers. Field operations include maintenance and repair of grounds and facilities; operation of campgrounds, cottages and lodges along with food and merchandise concessions; services such as rental of boats, docks, bicycles and other recreational equipment; and waterways maintenance through dredging and nuisance plant removal programs. Commissioned law enforcement personnel provide protective services and assist customers. Most parks offer educational programming and special activities for visitors through seasonal naturalist programs and customer service initiatives.² The following map shows the location of all state parks in Ohio:

State Park Officer Bradford Dobney was assigned to the Cleveland Lakefront State Park, located in Cuyahoga County. His father, Jonathan Dobney, is the assistant chief of the Ohio Division of Parks and Recreation located at ODNR headquarters in Columbus, Ohio. Other park locations involved in this investigation include Wingfoot State Park, located in Portage County, and Quail Hollow State Park, located in Stark County.

Applicable Rules, Policies and Procedures

The following are the applicable rules, policies, and procedures reviewed during the course of this investigation:

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) §2913.04(B) states, in part:

... no person, in any manner and by any means, including, but not limited to, computer hacking, shall knowingly gain access to, attempt to gain access to, or cause access to be gained to any computer, computer system, computer network, cable service, cable system, telecommunications device, telecommunications service, or information service without the consent of, or beyond the scope of the express or implied consent of, the owner of the computer, computer system, computer network, cable service, cable system, telecommunications device, telecommunications service, or information service or other person authorized to give consent.

² Source: Ohio Department of Natural Resources website.

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) §2921.41(A) states, in part:

... no public official or party official shall commit any theft offense, as defined in division (K) of section 2913.01 of the Revised Code, when either of the following applies:

- 1) The offender uses the offender's office in aid of committing the offense or permits or assents to its use in aid of committing the offense;
- 2) The property or service involved is owned by this state, any other state, the United States, a county, a municipal corporation, a township, or any political subdivision, department, or agency of any of them, is owned by a political party, or is part of a political campaign fund.

ODNR IT Resources Policy lists prohibited uses of IT resources. This list includes "personal use of IT resources that disrupts or interferes with state business or incurs an undue cost to the state."

[\(Exhibit 1\)](#)

ODNR Internet Security and Use Policy lists prohibited uses of the Internet. This policy lists "Non-business uses of the internet that interfere with business activities are not permitted." Also included is,

unauthorized operation of, participation in, or contribution to an online community including, but not limited to, forums, chat rooms, blogs, wikis, peer-to-peer file sharing, social networks and non-work related listservs is prohibited ... users are not permitted to access personal e-mail accounts e.g., Hotmail.com, using a networked PC. [\(Exhibit 2\)](#)

ODNR Park Officer Code of Conduct; 1-101-14 Performance of Duty states, in part:

"commissioned personnel shall not engage in personal activity or business which causes them to neglect or be inattentive to their duties."

ORC §102.03(D) prohibits an official from participating, formally or informally, in any matter that directly affects a family member's employment. For example, ORC §102.03(D) prohibits an official from securing any employment-related benefits for a family member.³

³ Ohio Ethics Commission, restrictions on nepotism or hiring family members: Ethics Commission Information Sheet#1.

The Ohio Department of Administrative Services (ODAS) requires all state agencies, in order to comply with the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), to maintain records of hours worked for each day worked by their employees. According to ODAS:

Additionally, there is also a state requirement for employers to keep certain records on behalf of their employees. Under Article II, section 34(a) of the Ohio Constitution and section 4111.14 of the Revised Code, employers in the State of Ohio are required to maintain records of the hours worked for each day worked for at least three years following the last date the employee was employed.

To comply with both the FLSA and state requirements, the following is a list of timekeeping information each agency is required to maintain:

- Time of day the employee begins and ends work on any given day;
- Hours the employee works each day; and
- Total hours employee works each work week.

No one particular method of maintaining these records is required, so employers have some flexibility in accomplishing these requirements, either by time clock, “sign-in sheet,” employee submission of hours worked, or some other verifiable method of recordkeeping.

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

On October 3, 2012, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General initiated an investigation of the anonymous allegations, and requested and received the following from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources:

- Information on the hiring process involving Bradford Dobney;
- Copies of lease agreements between ODNR and Bradford Dobney for the house, known as the Levitt house, at Quail Hollow State Park;
- Timeline and expense documents for the Levitt house improvements;
- Information on the Manager in Training selection process; and
- Email files for Bradford and Jonathan Dobney.

Bradford Dobney was hired at ODNR in June 1998 and worked as an intermittent or seasonal employee until he became a full-time employee as a park officer on December 19, 2010.

Allegation #1 – Hiring of Bradford Dobney

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General contacted the Ohio Division of Parks and Recreation Labor Relations Officer Carrie Spradlin, to obtain information on the process followed in the hiring of Bradford Dobney. Spradlin provided the applicant flow data sheet, interview score sheet, and approval request form.

On September 8, 2010, a three-member panel conducted interviews of Bradford Dobney and two other individuals for the position of full-time parks officer. The panel included a Cleveland Lakefront State Park assistant park manager, a Cleveland Lakefront State Park officer (FOP representative)⁴ and an ODNR Human Capital Management senior analyst. Bradford Dobney was one of two selected and approved to fill two open park officer positions.

On March 19, 2013, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General interviewed ODNR Human Capital Management Senior Analyst Renee Norris, who was part of the selection panel that interviewed Bradford Dobney. Norris did not recall any contact with Jonathan Dobney prior to Bradford Dobney's interview. Norris stated she did not feel pressured or influenced to select Bradford Dobney for the position.

Jonathan Dobney was interviewed by the Office of the Ohio Inspector General on May 20, 2013, and he denied having any part or influence in the hiring process of Bradford Dobney. Jonathan Dobney said he was a park manager at Rocky Fork State Park in southern Ohio at the time of Bradford Dobney's hiring, and had no authority to approve any hiring.

There appears to be no evidence of influence or authority by Jonathan Dobney in the hiring of Bradford Dobney.

⁴ Fraternal Order of Police, bargaining unit member. The collective bargaining agreement covering park officers requires one member from the bargaining unit be on the interview panel.

Accordingly, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General does not find reasonable cause to believe a wrongful act or omission occurred in this instance.

Allegation #2 – Renovation and Rental of Levitt House at Quail Hollow State Park

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General contacted Nick Hall from the Ohio Division of Parks and Recreation Business Services to obtain information on the Levitt House at Quail Hollow State Park. The Levitt House is a 2,553 square foot single-family home that includes three bedrooms, and three and a half bathrooms, and is valued at \$164,600.

Hall stated the Ohio Division of Parks and Recreation currently has 34 active residences located on state property, with six vacant during the course of this investigation. There are 23 former residences that are currently being used for offices, storage, or custodial use. The Levitt House was not being used as a residence in 2011. Hall created a timeline of events regarding the improvement and leasing of the Levitt House. Hall recalled that around July 2011, after an onsite visit, David Payne, chief of the Ohio Division of Parks and Recreation, asked Hall if the Levitt House could be used as a state park residence. The house was determined to be in need of repairs, so funding to make the improvements was appropriated and the repairs were made. Hall said the money spent on the ODNR houses comes from the rent received from each of the occupied residences. On March 1, 2013, Hall said from July 2011 to the present date, ODNR had spent \$23,352.02 on improvements to the Levitt House.

In determining what individuals typically occupy the residences, Hall explained, "... a park manager will recommend somebody in most scenarios and say, you know, this employee --- a lot of times it's a law enforcement employee (who) will provide, you know, additional security to this area." Hall provided a copy of an email from Park Manager Charlotte McCurdy sent on December 21, 2011, with an attachment. The attachment was a residence tenant data sheet for the Levitt House listing "Brad Dobney" as the new occupant and displayed the typed name of McCurdy in the park manager signature line. ([Exhibit 3](#)) Also provided was a December 21, 2011, email from Hall to Jennifer Kull, an ODNR Office of Budget and Finance employee,

advising Kull that Bradford Dobney had changed residences at Quail Hollow,⁵ and to increase his rent from \$144 to \$300 per month, effective December 10, 2011.

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General interviewed McCurdy who became the Quail Hollow Park Manager in October 2011. McCurdy said in October 2011, District Manager Doug Lyons told McCurdy that Bradford Dobney would be moving into the Levitt House and “they” needed to get the improvements to the house completed. McCurdy denied that she recommended Bradford Dobney to live in the Levitt House. McCurdy also did not recall sending the residence tenant data sheet to Hall.

During an interview conducted by the Office of the Ohio Inspector General on March 4, 2013, District Manager Lyons said that in July or August of 2011, “Chief Payne and, and Assistant Chief Dobney both, I had conversations with both of them at different times on that residence and they told me both that they wanted Brad Dobney in that residence.”

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General interviewed former Division of Parks and Recreation Chief David Payne.⁶ Payne said he was the chief from January 2011 to January 2012.

Regarding the Levitt House, Payne explained during a visit at Quail Hollow State Park, he noticed the Levitt House was empty and unused. Upon his return to Columbus he talked with Assistant Chief Jonathan Dobney about repairing the Levitt House back to a condition where someone could live in the house. Payne was questioned as to how Bradford Dobney came to live in the Levitt House. Payne said he left ODNR in January 2012 and claimed, “... as of today I don’t even know what the situation with the Levitt house is.” Payne was unsure where the money came from to make the improvements on the Levitt house. Payne did not recall telling Doug Lyons to have the house repaired and that Bradford Dobney would be moving into the house, but added he was not saying it didn’t occur.

⁵ At the time Bradford Dobney was leasing an upstairs apartment in the Carriage House building at Quail Hollow State Park. Dobney occupied the apartment from January 1, 2007, until moving into the Levitt House on December 10, 2011. Rent is based on 30 percent of market rental value.

⁶ Payne currently works at the Ohio Department of Administrative Services.

During an interview conducted on May 20, 2013, Jonathan Dobney was questioned about his role in the renovations of the Levitt House. At first Dobney denied any involvement in the improvements to the Levitt House or Bradford Dobney's selection as its tenant. Jonathan Dobney said when Payne saw the Levitt house was sitting empty, Payne asked Dobney what they should do with the house. Jonathan Dobney said he told Payne they "should bulldoze it," but Payne wanted the house fixed up and someone living in it. Jonathan Dobney was shown an email dated September 7, 2011, in which he and Bradford Dobney were included, discussing \$16,794.63 that had been spent on the house. In addition, the email included the request from Bradford Dobney for \$4,480.68 for new carpet and flooring. At this point, Jonathan Dobney agreed he did tell Lyons to get the improvements completed and Dobney's son was going to be living in the house. Jonathan Dobney maintained it was Payne's decision and direction to get the Levitt house repaired and have someone live in it. Jonathan Dobney denied he had anything to do with Bradford Dobney being selected to live in the house, but acknowledged he knew at least by September 7, 2011, that his son would be living in the house.

As part of the lease agreement, Bradford Dobney was required to transfer the electric utility billing into his name upon moving into the residence, but failed to do so. Because of a clerical oversight, the Division of Parks and Recreation continued paying the electric bills. On December 12, 2012, correspondence was sent to Bradford Dobney advising him of this error and instructing him to complete the billing transfer. Additionally, the Division of Parks and Recreation advised Bradford Dobney that he was responsible for the cost of electricity used at the residence over the last 12 months, which totaled \$3,156.60. A payment plan was established to repay the debt through monthly payments of \$263.05 beginning January 1, 2013.

While Jonathan Dobney was involved in the restoration of Levitt House, there is no evidence to suggest Jonathan Dobney directed his son to be the one to occupy the residence. On February 19, 2013, four days after Bradford Dobney's employment was terminated, ODNR terminated the lease agreement, effective March 23, 2013.

Accordingly, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General does not find reasonable cause to believe a wrongful act or omission occurred in this instance.

Allegation #3 – Manager in Training Selection

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General interviewed two of the three⁷ members of the Manager in Training (MIT) selection committee regarding the process used to select Division of Parks and Recreation employees to participate in the program. Deputy Chief Scott Fletcher and Deputy Chief Deanna Hammel explained the MIT selection committee is to identify promising leadership talent in the agency and structure a program that will help foster and build leaders for the future. The selection committee reports to Assistant Chief Jonathan Dobney. The only requirement to be selected into the program is that the candidate be a Division of Parks and Recreation employee. Candidates were asked to complete an application and provide a resume. The selection committee would review the applications and resumes, examining for grammar and spelling errors in the answers to the eight questions on the application. Fletcher said they looked for answers that were introspective and not superficial; however, the application instructs applicants, “Please be brief!!” Fletcher said they also considered the recommendation letters from the applicants’ supervisors. The selection committee would then give each applicant an overall score.

The MIT program for 2012 had four positions available, and received 40 applications. The selection committee scored the applications, interviewed seven people with the highest overall score and selected four people to participate in the program, including Bradford Dobney. Fletcher said the other three candidates interviewed were not willing to relocate and they wanted to stay in law enforcement. Both Fletcher and Hammel deny Jonathan Dobney had any input into the selection of the four candidates approved.

During the May 20, 2013, interview, Jonathan Dobney told investigators that he intentionally took himself out of the selection process and had no input with the selection committee. No evidence was obtained to substantiate Jonathan Dobney played any role in the selection of his son to the MIT program.

Accordingly, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General does not find reasonable cause to believe a wrongful act or omission occurred in this instance.

⁷ The third member of the MIT selection committee was Jeff Boester, who has since retired.

Allegation #4 – Computer Usage

A search for Bradford Dobney through the Internet revealed several postings by Dobney related to sports columns. A preliminary review of the state email files obtained by the Office of the Ohio Inspector General revealed Bradford Dobney sent Microsoft Word documents, which were authored on state devices, between his state and private email accounts. This indicated Dobney was using the state computer and email system for his personal business. ([Exhibit 4](#))

On October 5, 2012, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General seized three state-owned computers in the park officers' office, located at the Cleveland Lakefront State Park to perform forensic analysis on each computer to which Dobney had access. The forensic analysis focused on the allegation that Bradford Dobney was working on a sports column during hours he was working for the state and using a state computer. The sports column is called "Banners on the Parkway," and focuses on Xavier University basketball.

On June 5, 2012, Bradford Dobney was placed on restricted duty as a result of an unrelated administrative investigation⁸ and assigned to administrative duties at state parks in the northeast district, one of those being Wingfoot State Park⁹ in Summit County. During the forensic analysis it was revealed Dobney was using the state computer system at Wingfoot State Park for personal business. On November 1, 2012, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General seized the computer located at the Wingfoot State Park in the park officers' office in order to perform a forensic analysis on this computer as well.

The results of the forensic analysis revealed Bradford Dobney was using the state computer located at Wingfoot State Park to work on the following "Banners on the Parkway" articles. The file access history identified three "Banners on the Parkway" articles accessed from the state computers:

⁸ See Office of the Ohio Inspector General Report of Investigation 2012-CA00069, released on February 15, 2013.

⁹ Wingfoot State Park is a daytime-use only park.

“Banners on the Parkway” Articles Dobney Accessed from State Computers¹⁰

Document Name	Created Time	Last Time Saved	Last Time Printed	Posted to Website	Total Editing Time
What Needs to Happen	10/9/12 12:56	10/10/12 14:16	10/9/12 17:31	10/15/12 10:00	288 minutes
Article	8/24/12 19:54	8/30/12 02:53	N/A	8/30/12 11:20	92 minutes
Timeline	8/28/12 19:45	8/29/12 02:48	N/A	8/29/12 10:00	423 minutes
				TOTAL	13 hours and 23 minutes

The computer forensic analysis also identified a temporary Internet history file which showed Dobney logging in as administrator to “Banners on the Parkway” on April 11, 2012. The following is a screen shot located during the analysis:

The screenshot shows the SB Nation Blogger Dashboard for the site "Banners On The Parkway". The dashboard includes a top navigation bar with the SB Nation logo, user information (Brad D), and links to "My Blogs", "Editorial Queue", "Contrib Dashboard", "Manage Editorial", and "Manage Blog". A "Log Out" button is also present.

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Today's Stats**: Last updated @ 8:26p EDT. Auto-refreshes about every 5 mins.
 - Unique Visitors today
 - Page Views today
 - Visits today
 - Page Views per Visit
 - Visitors online now
- All-time Stats**:
 - 73,473 Visits
 - 124,743 Page Views
 - 119 Members
 - 418 Stories
 - 1 FanPosts
 - 34 FanShots
 - 0 Comments
 - 1 Twitter Followers
 - N/A Facebook Fans
- Top Pages**: A tabbed interface with options for Top Pages, Top Sources, Activity Grid, Big Board, and Resources.
- Top Stories for: Last 3 Days** (expand all / collapse all):
 - 391 pvs Front Page
 - 130 pvs 2012-2013 Look Ahead
 - 69 pvs Season in Review: Part Three- Recovery
 - 59 pvs 2012-2013 Look Ahead
 - 51 pvs Oriakhi Watch
 - 48 pvs Front Page
 - 37 pvs Griffin McKenzie and Building a Champion
 - 32 pvs Chris Thomas commits to Xavier
 - 19 pvs Season in Review: Part Three- Recovery
 - 11 pvs the Shootout and the fallout

At the bottom of the dashboard, there is a footer that reads: "SB Nation Blogger Dashboard. Please [submit bugs through our contact form](#). Thanks for your input!"

¹⁰ Hours in this chart are listed as military time.

In addition, a search of the hard drives for Internet history revealed that Dobney accessed “Banners on the Parkway,” other sports sites, and non-work related sites on 84 different occasions from August 2011 through October 2012. These Internet hits do not quantify the amount of time spent on the site, just that the site was accessed.

Additionally, Dobney posted a response on his “Banners on the Parkway” blog on November 1, 2012, at 9:01 a.m., just prior to the Office of the Ohio Inspector General’s seizure of the computer at 11:30 a.m. at Wingfoot State Park.

- Answering Rothstein, Posted by Bradford D on Nov 1, 9:01a (2012) to Bannersontheparkway.com

Since June 5, 2012, when Dobney was placed on an administrative duties restriction, he did not log on duty at the beginning of his shift or off duty at the end of the shift through the communications center as required by policy. ([Exhibit 5](#)) Additionally, the Division of Parks and Recreation did not require Dobney to record his work starting and ending times as is required. However, Dobney’s payroll hours indicate Dobney was on duty when work was being performed on the documents listed above. This was determined by a review of his payroll submissions for the dates in question. During Dobney’s administrative duties only period, he worked 10-hour shifts. Park officers receive shift differential¹¹ pay for all hours worked between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Comparing the hours Dobney accessed the state computer to his shift differential hours reveals the personal computer activity occurred during the hours he was being paid to work.

On March 21, 2013, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General made a request to Human Resource Manager Suzanne Lupovici of Vox Media¹² to determine if Bradford Dobney receives payment for the articles he writes for “Banners on the Parkway.” On April 24, 2013, Lupovici of Vox

¹¹ Bargaining unit agreement states in part; members shall receive a shift differential of \$.75 per hour for each hour worked commencing at 5:00 p.m. and ending at 6:00 a.m.

¹² Vox Media, formerly SB Nation, is the online publisher of the “Banners on the Parkway” website.

Media replied stating Bradford Dobney “is an unpaid contributor and thus he was not asked to sign any paperwork for our company.”

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General made contact with Michael Cohen, Vox Media, Human Resources. Cohen confirmed both Joel (Bradford’s brother) and Bradford are article contributors to “Banners on the Parkway.” Cohen also confirmed payments from Vox Media/SB Nation are made to Joel, but was unsure what arrangement Joel had with Bradford.

A review of Bradford Dobney’s personal bank records revealed a check written to the wife of Bradford from Joel’s account. On the memo line of the check was written “SBN.” The Office of the Ohio Inspector General contacted Joel Dobney regarding the “Banners on the Parkway” articles. Joel said he does not pay Bradford for his work on the blog, “but we do exchange money back and forth from time to time for various reasons.”

Accordingly, the Office of the Ohio Inspector General finds reasonable cause to believe a wrongful act or omission occurred in this instance.

Numerous attempts to contact Bradford Dobney were made, and when contact was made on March 1, 2013, he refused an invitation to be interviewed regarding these allegations.

Other Matters

During the forensic analysis of the state-owned computers seized from the Cleveland Lake Front State Park, several emails were identified as being sent and received by ODNR employees containing explicit images. None of the emails involved Bradford Dobney. Based on the age of the emails and as they were not related to the individuals named in this investigation, further review was not conducted by the Office of the Ohio Inspector General.

CONCLUSION

Through computer and email analysis, documents obtained and interviews conducted with current and former employees at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Office of the

Ohio Inspector General determined the following regarding allegations made against Bradford Dobney and his father Jonathan Dobney:

- There was no evidence to support Jonathan Dobney played any role in the hiring of his son as a parks officer.
- While Jonathan Dobney did not play a role in the selection of his son to reside in Levitt House at Quail Hollow State Park, he did direct some of the renovations at Levitt House knowing Bradford would be residing there.
- There was no evidence to support Jonathan Dobney played any role in the selection of his son to the Manager in Training program.
- Bradford Dobney utilized state-owned computers to compose and upload articles to a sports-related website called “Banners on the Parkway” and accessed various other sports and non-work related websites. The investigation was able to determine that four articles posted to the “Banners on the Parkway” website were open on Dobney’s state-owned computer for 13 hours and 23 minutes. The investigation was unable to determine the amount of time spent visiting the other websites, just that the visits occurred.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General makes the following recommendations and asks the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to respond within 60 days with a plan detailing how the recommendations will be implemented. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources should:

- 1) Review the actions of the employees named in this report to determine if their conduct warrants administrative action or training.
- 2) Review the computer use policy, including prohibited uses, with all ODNR employees to insure compliance.
- 3) Review the time and attendance policy with all employees to insure compliance, particularly the recording of daily start and end times, in order to comply with federal and state requirements, as well as ODNR policy.

- 4) Consider creating a policy regarding selection criteria for available state housing and notification to all employees of the available housing.

REFERRALS

The Office of the Ohio Inspector General is forwarding copies of this report of investigation to the prosecuting attorneys from Cuyahoga, Portage, and Stark counties for their consideration.

[\(Click here for Exhibits 1 – 5 combined\)](#)



STATE OF OHIO

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

RANDALL J. MEYER, INSPECTOR GENERAL

NAME OF REPORT: Ohio Department of Natural Resources

FILE ID #: 2012-CA00107

KEEPER OF RECORDS CERTIFICATION

This is a true and correct copy of the report which is required to be prepared by the Office of the Ohio Inspector General pursuant to Section 121.42 of the Ohio Revised Code.

**Jill Jones
KEEPER OF RECORDS**

**CERTIFIED
November 7, 2013**

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