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OSC Settles Retaliation Case for Park Rangers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Two seasonal park rangers, who alleged retaliation for filing a complaint with the Interior Department's Office of Inspector General, received full corrective action after an investigation by the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC).

The rangers, a married couple who had spotless work records at Mesa Verde National Park, alleged that the then-park superintendent used National Park Service funds to travel excessively to conferences and seminars, in support of a private company. They filed Freedom of Information Act requests for information on the matter and also filed a complaint with the Inspector General. The OIG's report found that the park superintendent's actions "created the appearance of a conflict of interest." The following season, the couple was tentatively offered seasonal park ranger positions again, only to see the offer rescinded.

The OSC investigation showed that Mesa Verde management decided not to rehire the couple in part because of their perceived whistleblowing. Following OSC's investigation, the National Park Service agreed to provide the couple with seasonal work at another national park of their choosing and to reimburse them for expenses incurred in anticipation of the rescinded rehiring.

"I'm pleased that the National Park Service corrected the actions its employees took against these park rangers," said Carolyn Lerner. "All federal employees have the right to blow the whistle on perceived wrongdoing without fear or retaliation."

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency. Our basic authorities come from four federal statutes: the Civil Service Reform Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Hatch Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). OSC's primary mission is to safeguard the merit system by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially reprisal for whistleblowing, and to serve as a safe channel for allegations of wrongdoing. For more information, please visit our website at www.osc.gov.