



U.S. Office of Special Counsel  
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## Office of Special Counsel Closes Case on Health and Safety Concerns at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish Hatchery in Texas

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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The Office of Special Counsel (OSC) today closed a case over allegations of health and safety violations at a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fish hatchery in Texas. Concerns brought forward by a whistleblower, who chose to remain anonymous, generally were substantiated by a Department of the Interior Office of the Inspector General investigation initiated by OSC's referral. The case resulted in a department-wide memo reiterating the importance of safety and training when using chemicals and pesticides and a separate asbestos abatement investigation.

"I am encouraged by the agency's continued focus on the remediation of asbestos-containing materials and, most importantly, the health of its employees," Special Counsel Henry J. Kerner wrote to President Trump of the Department of the Interior's review of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concerns. "In light of the agency's investigation and prompt attention to corrective actions, I have determined that the report meets all statutory requirements."

The allegations involved practices at the Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery in Burnet, Texas. The whistleblower alleged that an agency supervisor required employees to disinfect their hands with a potentially irritating disinfectant. Another allegation involved the incorrect handling of asbestos pipe abatement. A third allegation covered the inadequate approval of herbicide use.

OSC referred the whistleblower's concerns to the Department of the Interior, which investigated via its inspector general and completed a report. The report noted that an unrelated investigation in June 2016 found similar wrongdoing. The subject supervisor retired but Fish and Wildlife Service regional management failed to address fully the deficiencies uncovered by the June 2016 investigation. The department-wide actions address those shortcomings.

In addition to writing to the president, OSC sent a copy of the special counsel's [letter](#) and the agency's [report](#) to the chairmen and ranking members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the House Committee on Natural Resources. OSC also posted copies of these documents in its public file, available [here](#).

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*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](http://www.osc.gov).*