

## **Summary: Investigation of OST Conflict of Interest**

**Report Date: November 16, 2015**

OIG investigated allegations that an appraiser with the Office of Special Trustee (OST) wrongfully represented his own limited liability corporation, a mineral development company, in an effort to influence a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) management plan and environmental impact statement for the Pompeys Pillar National Monument in Montana (DRMP/EIS).

We substantiated that the OST appraiser authored and emailed 10 letters on behalf of his company to the BLM Montana State Office. The appraiser said he wrote the letters to BLM to persuade BLM to reconsider its plans related to the DRMP/EIS. He also attended five public meetings held by BLM in Montana to discuss the DRMP/EIS. At these meetings, on behalf of his company, he discussed with BLM his concerns about the DRMP/EIS.

We found the appraiser did not obtain approval from the OST ethics office to own and operate his mineral development company, nor did he disclose his involvement with the company on his annual financial disclosures. The appraiser admitted he conducted business on behalf of his company during his Government workday, and that he used his Government-issued laptop computer, his official Government e-mail, and his Government office phone to conduct business on behalf of his company.

The United States attorney for the District of Montana declined prosecution.

This is a summary of an investigation that was issued to OST, which suspended the employee without pay for 14 days.

