



U.S. Geological Survey – 2016 Diversity Award Nomination Form

The nomination and selection processes are based on the five diversity power competencies described in the book The Power of Diversity written by Kay Iwata, and on the seven Guiding Principles of the USGS.

**Diversity Power Competencies**

*Proactive advocates of diversity      Optimum people developers      Willing innovators*  
*Exemplary Values-based decision makers      Results-through-People achievers*

**Guiding Principles**

*Be respectful      Be accountable      Communicate      Value Difference*  
*Encourage      Focus      Collaborate*

There are three categories for the Diversity Awards—non-supervisor, supervisor, and group (team, center, branch, etc.) Anyone may nominate any employee or group. Current Diversity Council members are not eligible for nomination. Please complete this form and include a brief narrative (1 page maximum) describing your reasons for this nomination. Included on the next page is information to help you prepare your nomination.

The deadline for submitting nominations to Carole DeHerrera is close of business **December 30, 2016.**

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**Nominator's Name** Paul Exter, [peexter@usgs.gov](mailto:peexter@usgs.gov), 443-498-5534 \_\_\_\_\_  
(include email and phone number)

**Nomination is** (circle one)    Non-supervisor    (Supervisor)    Group

If nomination is a group, enter team leader name here and include a list of team member names in the narrative.

**Name of Nominee or Team Leader:** Robert H. Davis

**Duty Station:** Sacramento, CA

**Immediate Supervisor:** Paul Exter

**Science Center Chief:** Timothy Quinn

It is with great pleasure that I would like to recommend Robert H. Davis (Rob), Information Technology (IT) Specialist, California Water Science Center (CA WSC), for the **United States Geological Survey (USGS) Diversity Award**.

Mr. Davis came to the USGS in 2009 after a successful career in the United States Air Force. He was hired as the CA WSC IT Help Desk Supervisor/Manager, with the duty to manage a team of 10 IT Specialists. Those Specialists were tasked with supporting approximately 380 users from five distinct groups inside the mission areas of the USGS. This support was complex in that it spanned 10 geographically dispersed offices, with each group requiring unique services as it relates to their respective USGS mission. Despite the many challenges posed, Rob expertly managed and unified his team, by not only having the USGS mission in mind but also each individual IT Specialist, and their respective diverse background. Rob managed the team with the philosophy that diversity enables and empowers employees to reach the highest levels of service and excellence.

During Rob's time with the CA WSC, he distinguished himself as being a true leader, by displaying the tenants of Servant Leadership. Rob leads by example, from the bottom up, and shows that he genuinely cares about each of his employees through active listening and putting the needs of others first. Rob's leadership style is a reflection of his team, which is composed of individuals from five different racial backgrounds, four different faiths, and fifty percent female.

In addition to leadership, Rob has a mentorship commitment to his staff. Through training and mentorship, Rob dramatically reorganized the IT services of the team, to each person's individual strengths, passions and background. Rob has kept team members from leaving the USGS, due to personal challenges, and has procured assistance to individuals using the resources at his disposition. Rob's commitment to helping employees, through difficult times, is a value his employees respect. And by doing so, by keeping the team's turnover low - Rob ultimately maintained an excellent level of service for scientists of the CA WSC, the mission of USGS and the careers of our employees. But most importantly, Rob has provided for his staff, both professionally and personally. Rob is a longitudinal supervisor, providing supervision, mentorship and compassion for employees of all backgrounds, faiths and career appointments.

I highly recommend Rob Davis for the **United States Geological Survey (USGS) Diversity Award**. He truly exemplifies the award criteria and for this reason, I am nominating him for the 2016 Diversity Award.



## US Geological Survey 2016 Diversity Award Nomination

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**Nominator's Name:** Mary Johannis; [mjohannis@usgs.gov](mailto:mjohannis@usgs.gov); 916-278-3097

**Nomination is (circle one)**      **Non-supervisor**      **Supervisor**      **Group**

**Name of Nominee:** Rudy Obstaculo

**Duty Station:** Sacramento, CA

**Immediate Supervisor:** Mary Johannis

**Science Center Chief:** Eric Reichard

### JUSTIFICATION:

Rudy Obstaculo is the Supervisory IT Specialist in charge of the California Water Science Center's Information Technology Office. With Rudy leading by example, the CAWSC IT Office's recent hiring practices are well-aligned with the diversity and equal employment opportunity goals of the USGS. Since 2014, the CAWSC IT Office has hired 3 veterans, one of whom is a woman, and two of whom are 30% or more disabled. The 2009 Executive Order entitled, *Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government*, initiated a comprehensive effort to hire more veterans into Federal service through a variety of programs. Rudy's hiring practices are aligned with this initiative and have taken advantage of a number of its programs including Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA). He now employs 5 veterans in an office of 14; at a 36% veterans' employment rate, the CAWSC IT Office significantly exceeds the Department of Interior's FY15 veterans' employment rate of 16.8%.<sup>1</sup> In addition, this office has also made strides in hiring women into a traditionally underrepresented profession. Four women work as Information Technology Specialists, which is above the national average of 25% women<sup>2</sup> working in the Information Technology field.

Rudy sets a very inclusive and supportive tone for his office, which has a broad diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. On Fridays, he brings in home-baked goodies for his office. Food has a way of connecting people and building team spirit. Rudy's style

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Employment of Veterans in the Federal Executive Branch FY15*, <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/hire/hrp/reports/EmploymentOfVets-FY15.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Women & Information Technology website: <https://www.ncwit.org/>



of management encourages innovative thought and creative problem-solving. For example, with the approaching roll-out of NWIS-TS for the CAWSC, Rudy's team has been hard at work addressing connectivity issues in the Center's projects and field offices as well as the challenge of training over 100 employees in the new software. Through an employee's good working relationship with his former Bureau of Land Management team, the IT office was able to reserve a large training facility at a local Federal building to enable the CAWSC to train up to 25 students at a time in the use of NWIS-TS saving the Center the expense of either scheduling more training classes or renting a hotel conference facility. Rudy emphasizes the need for customer focus when his team addresses the myriad of hardware, software and other IT issues, which occur on a daily basis in a large science center. IT Help Desk requests are almost always resolved within 24 hours. The manner in which Rudy's team of IT specialists operates is consistent with the USGS guiding principles of being respectful and accountable as well as communicating and collaborating in an effective manner on an ongoing basis. Rudy definitely values differences. Through the good work of Rudy and his team of IT specialists, the CAWSC is able to better focus on our mission, which is "to collect, analyze and disseminate the impartial hydrologic data and information needed to wisely manage water resources for the people of the United States and the State of California."



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**Nominator’s Name:** Tanya J. Gallegos, 703-648-6181, tgallegos@usgs.gov, Ricardo Olea, Christina DeVera

**Nomination is** (circle one) Non-supervisor  **Supervisor**  Group

**Name of Nominee or Team Leader:** Harry (Terry) Lerch  
Associate Center Director, Eastern Energy Resources Science Center (retired 12/18/2016)  
Currently serving as Senior Advisor to the Associate Director for Energy and Minerals (NDAA appointment). tlerch@usgs.gov 703-648-6278

**Duty Station:** Reston, VA

**Immediate Supervisor (during 2016):** Daniel Hayba

**Science Center Chief:** Daniel Hayba

**Immediate Supervisor (since Jan 2017):** Murray Hitzman

**Supported by** Daniel Hayba, Director, Eastern Mineral & Environmental Resources Science Center, 703-648-6327

**Supported by** Linda Leake, Deputy Regional Director for Operations, Midwest Region, 608-781-6263

**Supported by** Murray W. Hitzman, Associate Director - Energy and Minerals, 703-648-4576

## **U.S. Geological Survey – 2017 Diversity Award Nomination: HARRY “TERRY” LERCH**

As the Associate Center Director for the Eastern Energy Resources Science Center (EERSC), Harry “Terry” Lerch was committed to excellence. For Terry, that meant providing opportunity to all talented scientists regardless of stature, race, sex, sexual orientation or religion. Terry innately understood that we can strengthen our diverse mix of scientists by fairly and equally providing mentorship, giving people a chance to enhance their knowledge, presenting employees with challenging work, raising expectations, and taking the time to solve dilemmas that impede progress.

Terry continually sought the perspective and took into account the insight and unique strengths of everyone in the science center. Terry has fostered diversity at EERSC by encouraging colleagues to express opinions and support ideas to make the working environment more inclusive, creative and fulfilling. Terry focused on the development of his staff scientists by encouraging them to participate in leadership training, peer review panels, and challenging them to do their best. Terry was, and is, open-minded and listens to the suggestions of others objectively. Terry had an open-door policy and employees felt comfortable going to him for suggestions, conflict resolution, or just to drop by for a chat. He was always willing to listen to employees' questions and concerns and was willing to take these items up the chain, whenever necessary. He was always open and receptive to hearing about innovation in the workplace, be it related to safety, laboratory procedures or administrative matters.

Terry made great efforts to understand, recognize, appreciate and acknowledge the work of the entire science center staff. Terry was always an advocate for the advancement of his employees through employment changes (Term to Permanent) or promotions. When he saw an employee growing into an indispensable role, he worked with the employee to identify opportunities for job placement or career advancement. Terry always gave credit to those who produced quality work and support by awarding STAR or GEM awards. He actively sought to strengthen the EERSC by fostering technical diversity and encouraged specialized training, supported new research ideas that in many cases resulted in new projects and encouraged collaboration with leading scientists in other institutions. Above all, Terry is a kind and uplifting person.

Terry strived to provide a non-threatening environment in which people with different approaches, styles and backgrounds were encouraged to share, and do their best work, even those whom he does not know. For example, Terry heard that one of our special-needs janitorial staff was sobbing uncontrollably in the breakroom because someone in another agency belittled her. Instead of ignoring the situation, Terry took the time out of his extremely busy schedule to discuss the incident with her supervisor so that such disrespectful treatment would be prevented in the future. This example of promoting value and respect of all employees highlights Terry's compassion, integrity, and sense of fairness.

Terry's unique ability to look beyond outward appearances to see only possibility and potential in people gave all of us in EERSC a platform to perform our best work. Through Terry's efforts in empowering all of our Team's diverse mix of scientists, he strengthened our ability to provide robust science to the diverse citizens of this Nation that we serve.