



## **BACKGROUND:**

In May 2012, the U.S. Postal Service announced a new retail strategy, the Post Office Structure Plan (POStPlan), to preserve post offices (PO) in rural America. Under the POStPlan, the Postal Service would modify retail service hours to match customer usage over a 2-year period. The Postal Service plans to hold community meetings and surveys for POStPlan offices to obtain community input before making changes.

Our objective is to evaluate the benefits and challenges of reducing retail service hours at two Postal Service retail locations, one in a low-density, rural location and one in a mid-density, non-urban location. We judgmentally selected the Antler PO in Antler, ND, and the Goldsboro PO in Goldsboro, MD, from the POStPlan to conduct a case study of potential customer service impacts.

## **WHAT THE OIG FOUND:**

Overall, customer service impacts resulting from the proposed plan varies for customers of the Antler and Goldsboro POs, because of the facilities' locations and access to alternate retail options. The proposed plan to preserve the two POs helps balance service with cost saving opportunities by matching retail hours to workload. It will also maintain community identities, ZIP Codes, lobby

access, and Saturday retail service hours. However, there would be customer inconveniences such as reduced hours of operation and traveling new distances to access alternate retail locations.

The Postal Service plans to explore other options, such as expanding partnerships with local businesses and staggering the open and close times of surrounding POs, with the communities of Antler and Goldsboro to mitigate reduced retail service hours. Also, customers would have the option of using *usps.com*, the Postal Service's toll-free number, 1-800-STAMP-24, and rural letter carriers to purchase products and services and pick up packages.

## **WHAT THE OIG RECOMMENDED:**

Because the potential service impacts resulting from the POStPlan will be based on the Postal Service's final decision after obtaining community input, we are not making any recommendations.

Management elected not to provide written comments, because there were no recommendations.