

July 1995

**Resources, Community,
and Economic
Development
Information Systems
Issue Area**

Active Assignments

Foreword

This report was prepared primarily to inform Congressional members and key staff of ongoing assignments in the General Accounting Office's Resources, Community, and Economic Development Information Systems issue area. This report contains assignments that were ongoing as of July 6, 1995, and presents a brief background statement and a list of key questions to be answered on each assignment. The report will be issued quarterly.

This report was compiled from information available in GAO's internal management information systems. Because the information was downloaded from computerized data bases intended for internal use, some information may appear in abbreviated form.

If you have questions or would like additional information about assignments listed, please contact Joel Willemsen, Director, Resources, Community, and Economic Development Information Systems Issues, on (202) 512-6253.

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Resources, Community, & Econ Develop Info Sys

AGRICULTURE COMPUTER SYSTEMS

TITLE: USDA'S PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS (S11375)

BACKGROUND : USDA spends over \$100 million annually for telecommunications related services--voice and data--that are individually planned and managed by the Department's component agencies. USDA's incompatible data systems and wide array of communications networks inhibit agencies from sharing information and resources.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Does USDA have the necessary controls for managing telecommunications resources cost-effectively and consolidating services to maximize savings? (2) Is USDA planning interoperable communications systems to meet the Department's information sharing needs?

TITLE: USDA'S FINANCIAL INFORMATION SYSTEM VISION AND STRATEGY (FISVIS) (511383)

BACKGROUND : USDA's financial systems are on OMB's high risk list because they are the underlying cause of USDA's inaccurate reporting and ineffective controls. Also, USDA's agencies have separate financial systems without common standards and data definitions. To resolve these problems, USDA has begun the Financial Information System Vision and Strategy (FISVIS) effort.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Is USDA following a sound systems acquisition approach in planning the FISVIS Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS)? (2) Will the FISVIS initiative resolve USDA's financial management problems?

ENVIRONMENT SYSTEMS

TITLE: HRA 12: EPA'S ACCOUNTING AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT THE SUPERFUND PROGRAM (511370)

BACKGROUND : Under the Superfund program, EPA has spent about \$7.4 billion to clean up some of the nation's most serious hazardous waste sites. While EPA estimates that about \$4.3 billion of these costs are recoverable from responsible parties, it has only recovered about \$546 million as of September 1992, the latest accounting period for which data is readily available.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) How well do current accounting and information systems meet the requirements of the Superfund cost recovery process? (2) What system-related deficiencies and barriers are impeding EPA from significantly improving cost recovery.

ENVIRONMENT SYSTEMS

TITLE: REVIEW OF HAZARDOUS WASTE INFORMATION SYSTEMS (511378)

BACKGROUND : The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) gives EPA responsibility for managing hazardous waste. To help implement the Act, EPA developed a system called RCRIS that tracks the activities of over 230,000 entities involved with hazardous waste. The system was intended to serve several classes of users including EPA headquarters and regions, and states.

KEY QUESTIONS : 1) Is RCRIS adequately meeting federal and state functional and operational requirements, and if not, how has this affected management of the RCRA program?

TITLE: EPA'S NATIONAL AIR POLLUTION INFORMATION SYSTEMS (511379)

BACKGROUND : The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 place dramatic new information gathering and reporting requirements on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The act requires data on ozone concentrations, as well as ongoing monitoring of six "criteria" pollutants. It also requires new information about other air pollutants and their possible health and ecological impacts.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Has EPA adequately planned and modified its information systems to include the new collection and reporting demands? (2) Does the system now satisfy key internal and external requirements including: (a) standards for data; (b) linkage among data bases; (c) geographic references by location; (d) ease of user input and retrieval; and (e) system documentation?

ENERGY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

TITLE: HRA 14: INFORMATION SYSTEMS SUPPORT FOR DOE'S ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (511389)

BACKGROUND : The Secretary of Energy recently announced that by 2000, DOE plans to save about 2 percent of the \$8.7 billion planned over the next 5 years. Although DOE's Environmental Management (EM) area has been cited for having numerous redundant and costly systems, EM systems are not scheduled for reduction and represent additional targets of opportunity.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the extent, cost, and functionality of information systems used to support DOE's EM programs? (2) What steps is DOE taking to prevent duplication and overlap of EM information systems?

ENERGY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

TITLE: REVIEW OF DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S REPLACEMENT OF THE NUCLEAR MATERIALS MANAGEMENT AND SAFEGUARDS SYSTEM (NMMSS) DEVELOPMENT (511395)

BACKGROUND : A DOE subcontractor is developing a new U.S. nuclear materials tracking system. This system is expected to replace the existing Nuclear Materials Management and Safeguards System (NMMSS) that has been used to account for U.S. imports and exports of nuclear materials since 1977. DOE plans to discontinue the existing NMMSS, and implement the new tracking system by April 30, 1995.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Do DOE and Lawrence Livermore (the project director) have an acceptance test strategy that will rigorously test the system being developed to ensure that the system provides accurate, complete, and timely information? (2) Are there indications of problems with the subcontractor's software code?

OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK - RDIS

TITLE: BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT'S (BLM) PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING THE AUTOMATED LAND AND MINERALS RECORD SYSTEM (ALMRS) (511393)

BACKGROUND : To manage over a billion documents containing data on 343 million acres of public land, in 1981 the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) initiated the Automated Land and Minerals Record System (ALMRS) project. Since then, ALMRS has been redesigned and resized a number of times. The cost of the project is estimated at \$403 million.

KEY QUESTIONS : What progress has BLM made in the development and implementation of ALMRS?

TITLE: HRA 22:DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL FOR EVALUATING HIGH RISK MODERNIZATION EFFORTS (511398)

BACKGROUND : For the first time in GAO's 1995 High Risk Series, GAO designated four information technology projects as high risk initiatives. These projects include the National Weather Service Modernization, the Federal Aviation Administration's Air Traffic Modernization, the Internal Revenue Service's Tax Systems Modernization, and Defense's Corporate Information Management Initiative.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) How can GAO further improve the efficiency and consistency of its reviews of high risk information technology modernization programs?

