

June 1997

# LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES

## Major Activities at Selected Units Are Not Common Across Agencies



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**Resources, Community, and  
Economic Development Division**

B-276725

June 26, 1997

**Congressional Requesters**

Federal agencies manage about 30 percent of the nation's total land surface. In fiscal year 1995, the latest year for which complete data were available when we initiated our review, the six agencies—the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service; the Department of the Army's Corps of Engineers; and the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service—that manage most of these lands spent about \$10.4 billion and employed about 108,000 staff. This large commitment of resources continues to spark congressional interest in the management as well as the uses being made of the federal lands. In the last 2 years, we have issued a variety of reports and testimonies in response to this interest.<sup>1</sup>

In anticipation of continued congressional interest in how federal lands are managed, you asked us to (1) identify the land management activities carried out by these agencies and identify those that are common across agencies; (2) describe the changes that have occurred related to the missions and activities carried out by these agencies; and (3) provide cost and revenue data for selected units at these agencies. As agreed with your offices, we selected 14 units in the six agencies to examine in detail in order to identify the units' major activities and to compare these activities across the six agencies. The units selected included three national parks or monuments, three national forests, three Fish and Wildlife Service refuges, two Bureau of Land Management resource areas, two Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs, and one Corps of Engineers dam and lake.

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**Results in Brief**

We identified 31 different activities performed by the agency units we examined in support of their various missions. These activities include cultural resource management, habitat conservation, natural resource management, rangeland management, and other activities listed in appendix I. Little commonality exists among the major activities performed—those on which these units spent most of their resources. Visitor services, maintenance, and construction were the major activities that showed the most commonality in that they were performed at units of three or more of the six agencies. Providing visitor services is a primary

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<sup>1</sup>See Related GAO Products at the end of this report for a listing of the reports and testimonies on land management issued since 1995.

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mission in some agencies and a secondary mission in others, whereas maintenance and construction are integral activities for most units. The units spent most of their resources (except for construction and maintenance expenditures) on activities related to their specific missions.

Overall, the legislatively established missions of these agencies have not changed. However, there has been a shift in the activities that are emphasized and in the way that activities are managed. For example, from 1990 through 1995, recreational use of federal lands increased by almost 245 million visits for the six agencies and about 4.5 million visits for the 14 units we visited. In contrast, consumptive uses, such as mining, grazing, and timber production, have decreased at some units for a variety of reasons. For example, since the market for uranium has substantially declined, uranium mining at Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management units has also decreased.

The total fiscal year 1995 costs to carry out the agencies' activities and the revenues generated at the 14 units we reviewed varied widely. Total costs ranged from \$225,000 for a Bureau of Reclamation unit to almost \$18 million at a Forest Service unit. Similarly, revenues ranged from zero at a Reclamation unit to nearly \$800,000 at a Forest Service unit. However, the costs do not provide a basis for comparison because the agencies' budget and accounting systems are designed differently and units' uses and sizes vary greatly.

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## Background

Federal agencies manage about 650 million acres of land, and the six agencies included in this review manage almost all of it, or about 648 million acres. About 70 percent of the land is managed by two agencies—the Bureau of Land Management (40 percent) and the Forest Service (30 percent).

Each agency has specific legislation that determines how its lands can be used. We characterize these land uses as multiple use, limited use, or specific use. Legislation requires the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service to manage their lands for multiple uses; no one use is considered to be primary. Therefore, use of the lands includes consumptive uses, such as mining, grazing, timber harvesting, hunting, and fishing, as well as other forms of recreation. In contrast, the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service lands are managed on a limited-use basis. For example, Park Service legislation directs the agency to preserve the natural and historic resources of the lands and provide for

the public's enjoyment of those lands in perpetuity. Similarly, the Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System is responsible for preserving a national network of lands and waters for the conservation and management of fish, wildlife, and plants for the benefit of present and future generations. Thus, while limited consumptive uses may occur on some parks and refuges, such uses are generally excluded. The Bureau of Reclamation and the Corps have a specific role to build and operate water projects. Reclamation's mission is evolving from developing and operating reservoirs and power plants to water resource management with additional missions related to fish and wildlife protection, recreation, and environmental restoration. The Corps' civil works mission is centered on navigation and flood control but has a growing emphasis on environmental protection. Both agencies also undertake land management activities that relate to their projects, but these activities, such as grazing, are very limited.

Appendix II provides overview information on each of the six agencies, including when the agency was created, the number and types of units they manage, and the geographical areas in which they operate, as well as total staffing and budget figures for 1995. The appendix also provides background information on the specific units visited.

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## Units Visited Have Little Commonality Across Agencies in Their Major Land Management Activities

Of the many different activities performed by the 14 units we reviewed, there was little in common among the major activities on which the units spent most of their fiscal year 1995 resources. The 31 land management activities undertaken by these units cover a wide range and include timber sales, wildlife habitat management, maintenance, and hazardous materials management. We considered activities to be common if they were performed at units of half or more of the six agencies and accounted for a substantial<sup>2</sup> share of their land management resources. At the Bureau of Reclamation and the Corps, which are primarily responsible for water projects and devote most of their resources to those projects, we attempted to identify commonality from the variety of land management activities that they also perform at the projects.

Using the criterion of activities that were performed at units of half or more of the six agencies, commonality occurred in only three of the land

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<sup>2</sup>Substantial activities are those land management activities with the largest costs in each unit that, when added together, accounted for approximately 60 percent of each unit's fiscal year 1995 costs.

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management activities—visitor services, maintenance, and construction.<sup>3</sup> Visitor services is a primary mission in some agencies and a secondary mission in others, whereas maintenance and construction are integral activities for most units. The units' major costs, excluding ones for construction and maintenance, generally relate to mission-related activities that differ from agency to agency.

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### Three Major Activities at the Units Are Common Across Agencies

Visitor services, maintenance, and construction were the major activities that showed the most commonality among the six agencies. While we identified other activities, such as the protection of natural and cultural resources and of endangered species at a number of units, these activities accounted for only a small portion of these units' costs. We did not include general administration as a common activity because it is not a land management activity.

Visitor services was the only common mission-related activity. This activity can include operating visitor centers and providing other educational activities at parks, refuges, or resource areas; managing concessions; and operating the permit systems for recreational activities, such as camping, back country hiking, and river rafting. Although visitor services was one of the activities on which the units spent most of their land management resources at five agencies, that was not the case at the Bureau of Reclamation units we visited in part because the Bureau's policy is to have others, such as federal or state agencies, manage recreational activities on the Bureau's lands.

Maintenance and construction are support activities typical of most federal operations. Maintenance and construction activities can include maintaining or constructing visitor centers, administrative buildings, staff quarters, roads, water management facilities, and restroom facilities and can account for a substantial amount of costs at some units.

Maintenance costs varied considerably, depending partly on how and whether the costs were captured. For example, the maintenance costs captured by the National Park Service units ranged from 13 to 43 percent. In contrast, most maintenance costs at the Bureau of Land Management are not charged to the unit, but are recorded at the next higher level. Construction costs can also vary drastically from one year to the next, depending on whether an expensive item, such as a building or road, is

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<sup>3</sup>A number of activities were common between the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service, such as mining and grazing, but they were not major activities across the units in other agencies.

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funded and built. For example, at the Pee Dee Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina, the construction of a maintenance building—an infrequent expenditure—accounted for about 60 percent of the unit's 1995 costs.

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### Most Units' Major Activities Relate to the Agencies' Missions

The units' major costs generally related to the activities supporting their agencies' missions, and these activities were not common across agencies. For example, the Bureau of Land Management spent almost 40 percent of its funds at each unit on energy and minerals and rangeland management activities. This expenditure is consistent with the Bureau's multiple-use mission. Similarly, at the wildlife refuges, one of the largest expenditures was habitat management, which ranged from 12 to 50 percent of the units' costs at the refuges we visited. These expenditures are consistent with the refuges' limited-use mission of providing a refuge for migratory birds and other wildlife.

The Bureau of Reclamation and the Corps have specific-use missions related to building and operating water projects, such as dams and reservoirs. Most of the resources at the units we visited are spent on these activities. For example, at the Santa Rosa Dam and Lake in New Mexico, 57 percent of the project's costs are for maintaining and operating the dam and reservoir.

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### Changes in Emphasis Have Occurred

Over the last quarter century, the missions carried out by the agencies and their units have basically remained the same, but shifts have occurred in the activities that are emphasized and in the way that activities are managed. For example, recreation has increased, while consumptive uses have decreased at some units. In addition, management activities at the units have changed—the emphasis on planning has increased in response to various legislative requirements, and interagency coordination has expanded in areas such as providing visitor services, maintenance, and construction.

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### Recreational Use Is Increasing

The most significant change is the increase in recreation at federal units. Typical examples of recreation offered at the units include hiking, camping, fishing, and picnicking. Depending on the unit, a host of other types of recreation may also be available, including white-water rafting, rock climbing, skiing, mountain biking, and the use of 4-wheel drive and other types of all-terrain vehicles.

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From 1990 through 1995, recreational use increased from about 26.4 million visits to about 30.9 million, or nearly 17 percent in total for the 14 units we reviewed.<sup>4</sup> This increase was typical for the six agencies overall. They experienced a combined increase of about 245 million visits, or about 17 percent, over the same period. Recreational use is increasing in these units in part because of the general trend toward increased recreational demand for federal lands.

Recreation is also increasing because of legislative and executive changes and changes in the areas bordering federal lands. The enactment of the Reclamation Recreation Management Act of 1992 has promoted recreation at the Bureau of Reclamation's facilities. The act stated that there is a federal responsibility to provide opportunities for public recreation at federal water projects but did not authorize the Bureau to manage recreation projects. Instead, it authorized the Bureau to pay a larger share of the costs for local governments to operate recreational facilities at such units. The act raised the amount the Bureau could pay for the design and construction of recreational facilities completed before 1965 from \$100,000 to up to 50 percent of the recreational facility's total costs. At the units we visited, the Bureau matches the funds contributed to the development of recreational facilities on a 50/50 basis with the state. As a result, \$786,000 was made available for the design and construction of recreational facilities in fiscal year 1997 at the Deer Creek Reservoir in Utah; additional amounts are anticipated for fiscal year 1998. In addition, the Bureau put \$670,800 into recreational facilities and design at the Elephant Butte Reservoir in New Mexico in fiscal years 1995 and 1996.

Legislation has also helped increase the recreational use of specific federal lands. For example, on December 31, 1987, the Congress created the El Malpais National Monument in New Mexico by transferring approximately 114,000 acres of land from the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service to the National Park Service. Recreation has become the primary use of the monument, and visitation increased from about 52,000 in 1989 to 97,400 in 1995.

A March 1996 executive order also clarified and expanded, to the extent consistent with existing laws and interagency agreements, the role of recreation on refuges. Although recreation had been an acceptable activity in refuges as described in the Recreational Use of Fish and Wildlife Areas Act of 1962, Executive Order 12996 of March 25, 1996, clarified that

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<sup>4</sup>Recreational use data for the units and the agencies are estimated because not all the units or all the agencies had consistent data for the 5-year period.



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specific types of recreation, such as hunting, wildlife observation, and environmental education, are priority public uses of refuges and that these uses are to be expanded when compatible and consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management and are otherwise in the public interest.

In addition to the legislative and executive changes, changes in the areas bordering federal lands have also resulted in increased recreational use. For example, at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina, park officials said the success of the surrounding communities in attracting visitors has also increased visitation at the park. The introduction of country music halls and theaters in towns near the park's western entrance has contributed to increased visitation to the park (from 6 million visitors in 1978 to 9 million visitors in 1995). The officials noted that the addition of a 24-hour-a-day casino scheduled to open in 1997 in Cherokee, near the North Carolina entrance to the park, is also likely to increase visitation.

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### Some Consumptive Uses Are Decreasing

While recreation has been increasing at the units we visited, traditional consumptive uses, such as grazing, mining, and timber harvesting, have decreased at some units. For example, the legislation creating both Canyonlands National Park in Utah and El Malpais National Monument in New Mexico provides for phasing out grazing and mining. The last grazing lease at Canyonlands was terminated in 1985, and the last grazing lease at El Malpais will be terminated by December 31, 1997. By 1993, there were no active mining claims in Canyonlands, and the act creating El Malpais prohibits mining, although little existed.

Market conditions and environmental concerns have also decreased certain consumptive uses of federal lands. During the 1970s and 1980s, the market for uranium, which created a demand for mining activity in New Mexico and Utah, declined substantially, thus reducing the amount of mining occurring in units managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. Some timber production has also decreased because of environmental concerns. In 1995, 2.5 million board feet of timber was harvested from the Cibola National Forest's Mount Taylor Ranger District in New Mexico. However, according to the Forest Service, in 1996 the court ordered a stop in timber harvesting while the harvest's potential impacts on the Mexican spotted owl were assessed.

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## Agencies Use Increased Planning to Manage Their Activities

Over time, planning and environmental analyses have become increasingly important and costly aspects of how the agencies manage their activities. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 requires agencies to prepare planning and environmental assessment documents, and preparing these documents requires increased data and technical resources. In addition, agency-specific legislation, such as the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the National Forest Management Act, established planning requirements for the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service, respectively. The impact on an agency can be significant. For example, the Forest Service has spent more than \$250 million over the last 20 years developing multiyear plans for managing timber production, livestock grazing, recreation, wildlife and fish habitat, and other legislatively mandated uses of national forests.

Finally, other legislation requires the agencies, in doing their planning and evaluations, to consider various specific impacts, such as those on water resources, air quality, and archaeological and historical resources. Complying with these requirements can be a major task. For example, complying with cultural resource requirements is a major task in the Utah/New Mexico area because the Four Corners<sup>5</sup> area, of which these states are a part, is one of the most important cultural resource areas in the country. Thus, according to unit officials, cultural resource assessments have to be prepared for nearly all activities.

As the agencies' experience with these requirements has increased, so has the technical expertise needed, the depth of information required, and the staff expertise necessary to fulfill the requirements. As a result, the agencies have had to add more specialists with expertise in such areas as biology, entomology, botany, forestry, archaeology, recreation, and geology.

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## Some Units Have Increased Their Interagency Cooperation

Some units perform their land management activities cooperatively with units of other agencies. The Canyon Country of Southeast Utah offers an example of how interagency cooperation can occur. The area includes Canyonlands National Park, the Bureau of Land Management's Moab District, and the Manti-La Sal National Forest. In 1993, in response to the escalating impacts of the recreational boom in Canyon Country, all of the locally based county, state, and federal land management authorities

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<sup>5</sup>The Four Corners area is the point at which the borders of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah connect.

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formed the Canyon Country Partnership. The partnership seeks to, among other things, promote cooperative planning and share resources.

The partnership produced an agreement for the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service to share law enforcement responsibilities and for the federal agencies to share equipment, expertise, and staff time on construction and maintenance projects. Activities included developing and sharing maintenance plans and performing maintenance for one another, such as construction tasks, road repair, and mowing. The partners also provided services to one another for tasks such as restroom maintenance. The partnership is also working to complete a regionwide geographic information system and to diversify the economies of the region's small communities and ease their transition from resource extraction, such as mining, to economies based on amenities, such as recreation.

In New Mexico, the Bureau of Land Management and El Malpais National Monument cooperate in their law enforcement activities, and they and the Forest Service share equipment and staff expertise to perform maintenance. Also, the Corps joined with state and federal agencies to develop the New Mexico Recreation and Heritage Guide Map to inform the public about the recreational activities on the public lands in the state.

In Moab, Utah, a visitor center that opened on June 15, 1993, serves the needs of the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, and the county. This center cost about \$1.2 million to design, construct, and equip with exhibits, audio visual equipment, and a video. A state agency provided \$819,000 of the cost through a low-interest loan, and the federal government provided the remaining \$390,000. Such jointly operated visitor centers offer the opportunity to build a single, comprehensive visitor center that benefits the public by offering longer hours of operation and one-stop shopping for information about the entire area. Because staffing and maintaining a visitor center can be costly and labor-intensive—the center operates 363 days a year and 13 hours a day in season—sharing the operation reduces the cost and burden to all of the agencies involved.

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## Wide-Ranging Costs and Revenues Are Not Readily Comparable

The total fiscal year 1995 costs and revenues for each of the 14 units we reviewed varied widely. Types of costs included those for managing energy and minerals, grazing, timber sales, and recreation. Examples of revenues included mineral leasing fees, grazing fees, timber sales

revenues, entrance fees, and camping fees. Total costs ranged from \$225,000 for the Bureau of Reclamation's Deer Creek Reservoir in Utah to almost \$18 million at the Forest Service's Cibola National Forest in New Mexico. Similarly, Reclamation's Deer Creek Reservoir generated no revenues, whereas the Cibola National Forest had almost \$800,000 in revenues. (Table 1 shows the costs and revenues for the 14 units.)

**Table 1: Costs and Revenues for Fiscal Year 1995 at 14 Units Visited**

Dollars in thousands		
Agency/unit	Costs	Revenues
<b>Bureau of Land Management</b>		
Rio Puerco Resource Area	\$2,001	\$427
San Juan Resource Area	\$837	\$227
<b>Bureau of Reclamation</b>		
Deer Creek Reservoir	\$225	0
Elephant Butte Reservoir	\$372	\$55
<b>Corps of Engineers</b>		
Santa Rosa Dam and Lake	\$814	\$11
<b>Forest Service</b>		
Cibola National Forest	\$17,879	\$772
Manti-La Sal National Forest	\$10,209	\$264
Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest	\$9,127	\$528
<b>Fish and Wildlife Service</b>		
Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge	\$771	\$6
Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge	\$1,082	\$42
Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge	\$583	\$16
<b>National Park Service</b>		
Canyonlands National Park	\$4,454	\$276
El Malpais National Monument	\$1,238	0
Great Smoky Mountains National Park	\$13,171	\$733

Source: The agencies' data.

Comparing the costs and revenues of these units is not particularly meaningful, however, because of the many variables, in addition to differences in size and use, that affect these amounts. First, the agencies' budget and accounting systems are designed differently to meet the individual agencies' requirements. Consequently, they do not provide a basis for comparing activity costs across the agencies. For example, Fish and Wildlife Service units report their costs primarily in two broad

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categories—operations and maintenance—while other agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management, identify narrow categories such as rangeland, cultural resources, or energy and minerals management separately. Bureau of Reclamation units are usually part of much larger projects. For example, the Elephant Butte Reservoir in New Mexico is part of the Rio Grande Project. As a result, the land management costs at specific Bureau units are not readily identified.

Second, some costs, such as those for maintenance and administration, are not always charged at the unit level, but are recorded at a higher level in the agency. For example, maintenance at the Bureau of Land Management's San Juan Resource Area in Utah is largely performed by and charged to the Moab District Office, a higher-level unit. Likewise, most administrative activities at the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service units are performed at other levels within the agency and therefore not charged to those units. In contrast, most maintenance and administration are performed and costs accumulated at the unit level in the national parks and forests. Thus, a national park could appear to cost more to operate than a Bureau of Land Management unit that does not account for similar costs at the unit level.

Finally, the costs to operate recreational facilities at the units are not included in the total costs for all units. Recreation at the Bureau of Reclamation and the Corps units that we visited is managed under long-term agreements with the states. As part of these agreements, the states paid most of the operating costs. In contrast, units such as those at the Forest Service and Park Service recorded recreational costs directly at the unit level.

Comparing revenues is not particularly meaningful either because revenues vary greatly depending on the uses allowed and the fees charged at the units. For example, Great Smoky Mountains National Park charges no entrance fees, while at Canyonlands National Park, entrance fees account for over 75 percent of its \$276,000 in revenue.

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## Agencies' Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to the Forest Service, the Corps of Engineers, and the Department of the Interior for their review and comment. The Forest Service noted that it accepted the report as written and indicated that it reflects the comments presented by the agency during the exit conferences and adequately expresses the view of the agency. The Corps of Engineers reviewed the draft and had no comments.

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The Department of the Interior agreed with the report but offered several comments about the need to clearly state in the “Results in Brief” our criterion for what constitutes a common activity and to make clear that our message relates to the 14 units we visited and is not being projected to the six agencies. We agree with these comments and added language to our “Results in Brief” and to the body of the report clarifying our criterion for what constitutes a common activity and more clearly stating that our message relates to the 14 units we visited. Interior officials also said we should point out that the Interior agencies and the Forest Service have an established program for cooperating and working together on fire management and fire suppression activities. We recognize that Interior, the Forest Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and state foresters coordinate through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group and the National Mobilization System to establish wildland fire policies and to conduct fire suppression activities. We did not address these activities in the report because our focus was on the major activities at the 14 units we visited. Interior officials also offered several comments to improve the accuracy and clarity of the report, and we have included them as appropriate.

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## Scope and Methodology

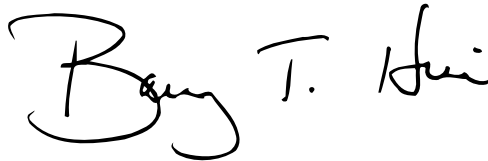
To obtain information for this report, we interviewed officials and obtained and reviewed documents and other data from six agencies—the Department of the Army’s Corps of Engineers; the Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service; and the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service. We conducted our review from July 1996 through May 1997 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Appendix III contains a more detailed explanation of our objectives, scope, and methodology.

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Unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 15 days after the date of this letter. At that time, we will send copies of this report to the Secretaries of Agriculture, the Army, and the Interior; the Chief of the Forest Service; the Chief, U.S. Corps of Engineers; the Directors of the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service; the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; and other interested parties. We will also make copies available to others upon request.

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If you have any questions about this report, please call me at (202) 512-8021. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix IV.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry T. Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "B".

Barry T. Hill  
Associate Director, Energy,  
Resources, and Science Issues

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List of Requesters

The Honorable Conrad Burns  
United States Senate

The Honorable Frank H. Murkowski  
Chairman, Committee on  
Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate

The Honorable Larry Craig  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Forests and  
Public Lands Management  
Committee on Energy and  
Natural Resources  
United States Senate

The Honorable Ralph Regula  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior  
Committee on Appropriations  
House of Representatives

The Honorable James V. Hansen  
Chairman, Subcommittee on National  
Parks and Public Lands  
Committee on Resources  
House of Representatives



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**Abbreviations**

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BOR	Bureau of Reclamation
FS	Forest Service
FTE	full-time equivalent
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service
GAO	General Accounting Office
NPS	National Park Service

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# Land Management Activities Carried Out at One or More of the 14 Units Within the Six Agencies

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## Activities With the Largest Costs

(Those in each unit which, when added together, account for 60 percent of a unit's costs.)

- Construction (facilities, roads, and trails)
- Cooperative work
- Cost-sharing agreements
- Cultural resources
- Ecosystem planning, inventory, and monitoring
- Energy and minerals management
- Fire management (fire and presuppression)
- Forestland vegetation management
- Habitat management (wildlife and fisheries)
- Law enforcement
- Maintenance (facilities, roads, and trails)
- Natural resources management
- Resource management plan preparation
- Rangeland/grazing management
- Realty
- Timber sales/salvage sales management
- Visitor services (recreation management)
- Volunteer programs
- Waterfowl management
- Watershed improvements
- Wilderness management

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## Other Activities

- Environmental education
- Emergency pest suppression
- Hazardous materials management
- Land acquisition
- Land line management (surveying)
- Resource protection
- Riparian area<sup>1</sup> management
- Soil/water/air management
- Rights-of-use (permit) administration
- Threatened and endangered species management

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<sup>1</sup>Areas of land directly influenced by permanent water.

# General Overview of the Agencies and the Units Visited

The six agencies and the 14 units we reviewed vary in their sizes, budgets, and operations. This appendix provides a general overview of these agencies and their units that we visited. The agencies have been created at various times over the last 170 years, manage a variety of units in different parts of the country, and manage vastly different amounts of acreage with different budgets and staffing levels. Information on these agencies is presented in tables II.1 and II.2.

**Table II.1: Year Created, Number and Type of Units, and Area of Operation for Six Land Management Agencies**

Agency	Year created	Number and type of land management units	Area of operation
BLM	1946	139 resource areas	28 states, mainly 10 western states and Alaska
BOR	1902	348 reservoirs and 254 diversion dams	17 states west of the Mississippi
Corps <sup>a</sup>	1824	about 460 water-resource projects	Nationwide
FS	1905	155 national forests and 132 other units including national grasslands	44 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands
FWS <sup>b</sup>	1903	503 refuges and 86 other areas	All 50 states, Puerto Rico, 3 territories, and 5 Pacific island possessions
NPS	1916	54 parks and 321 other units	49 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Saipan, and the Virgin Islands

<sup>a</sup>The Corps' Civil Works program only.

<sup>b</sup>National Wildlife Refuge System only.

Source: The agencies' data.

**Appendix II  
General Overview of the Agencies and the  
Units Visited**

**Table II.2: Acres Managed, Staffing, Visitation, and Budget Amounts for Six Land Management Agencies for Fiscal Year 1995**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Acres managed (in millions)</b>	<b>Staffing (in FTEs<sup>a</sup>)</b>	<b>Visitation (in million visits)</b>	<b>Budget (in millions)</b>
BLM	267.1	11,046	58	\$1,240
BOR	8.6	6,954	87	859
Corps <sup>b</sup>	12.4	27,661	386	3,339
FS	191.6	40,712	830	3,362
FWS <sup>c</sup>	91.8	2,215	27	168
NPS	76.6	19,876	270	1,474
<b>Total</b>	<b>648.1</b>	<b>108,464</b>	<b>1,658</b>	<b>\$10,442</b>

<sup>a</sup>A full-time equivalent (FTE) equals the number of hours worked divided by the number of compensable hours in a fiscal year.

<sup>b</sup>The Corps' Civil Works program only.

<sup>c</sup>National Wildlife Refuge System only.

Source: The agencies' data.

## Bureau of Land Management

Within the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), we visited two resource area offices, one in Utah and one in New Mexico. Resource areas are the lowest level land management units in BLM. Following are descriptions of the units and a table presenting information on their size, staffing, visitation, costs, and revenues.

### San Juan Resource Area

The San Juan Resource Area is located in southeastern Utah. The area is bordered by the Colorado state line on the east, the Navajo Reservation on the south, the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Canyonlands National Park on the west. It is part of BLM's Moab District. The area office is in the process of being reorganized into the Monticello Field Office with the same boundaries, but with expanded authority.

The area is noted for its scenery, cultural and historic resources, and recreational opportunities. The uses that are allowed represent the broad multiple-use mission of BLM, including mining, grazing, harvesting of forest products, and hunting as well as a broad range of recreational activities.

### Rio Puerco Resource Area

The Rio Puerco Resource Area is located in central and north-central New Mexico. It is part of BLM's Albuquerque District. The area office is in the

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process of being reorganized into the Albuquerque Field Office with the same boundaries, but with expanded authority. Resource area uses include energy and mineral uses, such as oil, gas, and coal leasing, and mineral mining. The uses also include activities related to geological and paleontological resources, grazing, collecting fuelwood, and a range of recreational activities, including backpacking, climbing, hiking, camping, swimming, horseback riding, nature study, off-road vehicle touring, and viewing scenery.

Table II.3 provides overview information on the BLM units visited.

**Table II.3: Fiscal Year 1995 Data on the BLM Units Visited**

	Resource area	
	San Juan	Rio Puerco
Acres	1,800,000	1,350,000
Visitation	148,000	77,800
FTEs <sup>a</sup>	19	47
Costs	\$837,000	\$2,001,000
Revenues	\$227,000	\$427,000

<sup>a</sup>A full-time equivalent (FTE) equals the number of hours worked divided by the number of compensable hours in a fiscal year.

Source: The agency's data.

## Bureau of Reclamation

We visited two Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) units—Deer Creek Reservoir in Utah and Elephant Butte Reservoir in New Mexico. Although these reservoirs provide a variety of recreational activities, BOR manages none of the recreational activities at these locations because BOR's policy is to transfer, when possible, the management of recreation areas on its project lands to other governmental, e.g., federal and state, entities.

### Deer Creek Reservoir

Deer Creek Reservoir is located on the Provo River about 16 miles northeast of Provo, Utah. It is situated in close proximity to the Salt Lake City and Provo metropolitan areas in Utah and is the third most popular reservoir for recreation in Utah. The Congress authorized the construction of the Deer Creek dam in 1933 under the National Industrial Recovery Act. Construction began in 1938, and the dam was completed in 1941. The 6-mile long reservoir created by the dam has 18 miles of shoreline. The

reservoir's water provides irrigation and municipal and industrial water directly to two counties and by exchange to two more.

Fishing, grazing, hunting, and recreation are authorized, but hunting is not allowed on lands designated for recreation. Mining and timber harvesting, while permissible under certain federal laws, are deemed incompatible with the project's purposes and are therefore not authorized on the project's lands.

BOR is responsible for operating and maintaining the dam and providing oversight of the adjoining recreation lands run by the state. This oversight includes land-use planning, resource protection and enhancement, rights-of-use administration, and 50/50 cost sharing for mutually agreed-upon capital improvement projects. BOR does not fund annual and/or recurring operating and maintenance costs for recreation at this unit.

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## **Elephant Butte Reservoir**

Elephant Butte Reservoir is located on the Rio Grande near Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, or about 125 miles north of El Paso, Texas. Construction of Elephant Butte dam (originally called Engle Dam) began in 1908 and was completed in 1916 as part of the Rio Grande Project. The dam and reservoir were originally constructed to store floodwaters and to provide regulated release of water for irrigation needs. In the late 1930s, Elephant Butte powerplant was built at the dam to harness the water flow for electricity production.

The reservoir created by the dam is about 30 miles long with 250 miles of shoreline. In 1973, BOR leased to New Mexico lands within the reservoir area, including housing units and other improvements, and the state operates the area as a state park. According to the park superintendent, Elephant Butte Lake State Park is the largest state park in New Mexico and has 95,000 to 105,000 visitors on certain holiday weekends.

Fishing, hunting, and recreation are authorized, but hunting is not allowed in designated recreation areas. Grazing is authorized and is managed for BOR by BLM. As at Deer Creek, mining and timber harvesting are incompatible with the project's purposes and are not authorized.

BOR is responsible for the dam's operation and maintenance and provides oversight of the recreation lands run by the state. This oversight includes land-use planning, resource protection and enhancement, rights-of-use



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administration, and 50/50 cost sharing for mutually agreed-upon capital improvement projects. BOR does not fund annual and/or recurring operating and maintenance costs for recreation at this unit.

Table II.4 provides overview data on both reservoirs.

**Table II.4: Fiscal Year 1995 Data on the BOR Units Visited**

	Deer Creek	Elephant Butte
Acres	6,300	61,100
Visitation <sup>a</sup> (at state park)	235,000	1,814,000 <sup>b</sup>
FTEs <sup>c</sup> (for land management)	< 1 <sup>d</sup>	5 <sup>e</sup>
Costs	\$225,000	\$372,000
Revenues	0	\$55,000 <sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Calendar year data.

<sup>b</sup>In calendar year 1995, a total of 283 people toured the BOR facilities and dam.

<sup>c</sup>A full-time equivalent (FTE) equals the number of hours worked divided by the number of compensable hours in a fiscal year.

<sup>d</sup>Although various BOR Provo Area Office resources staff have land management responsibilities at Deer Creek, they spend less than 1 percent of their time on activities associated with Deer Creek reservoir lands.

<sup>e</sup>One FTE is for a resource management specialist.

<sup>f</sup>Revenue is for vegetation management at Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs. The agency cannot separate out revenue for Elephant Butte .

Source: The agency's data.

## Corps of Engineers

We visited the Corps of Engineers' Santa Rosa Dam and Lake project in New Mexico. The project is located in east-central New Mexico and is part of the Corps' Albuquerque District. The project was authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1954 and provides for (1) the conservation of irrigation water, (2) sedimentation control, and (3) flood control. The project was completed in 1981. The Santa Rosa project is not a typical Albuquerque District or Corps of Engineers project because it does not have a permanent recreation pool (the water can be almost drained in dry summers); however, the irrigation pool is frequently available for water recreation. The recreation areas on the project are leased to, and managed by, the New Mexico Park and Recreation Division. Camping, picnicking, swimming, hiking, fishing, boating, and other water recreation are allowed. Over one-half of the project's lands are leased for grazing, which

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provides the project's revenues. Also, some project land is usually open to hunting.

Table II.5 provides overview information on the Corps unit we visited.

**Table II.5: Fiscal Year 1995 Data on the Corps Unit Visited**

	<b>Santa Rosa Dam and Lake</b>
Acres	13,525
Visitation <sup>a</sup>	68,000
FTEs <sup>b</sup>	4.5
Costs	\$813,600
Revenues to Corps	\$11,400
Revenues to State Park	\$71,500

<sup>a</sup>Calendar year data.

<sup>b</sup>A full-time equivalent (FTE) equals the number of hours worked divided by the number of compensable hours in a fiscal year.

Source: The agency's data.

## Forest Service

The Forest Service's (FS) mission is "to achieve quality land management under the sustained multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of people." We visited the Cibola National Forest in New Mexico, the Nantahala-Pisgah<sup>7</sup> National Forest in North Carolina, and the Manti-La Sal National Forest in Utah. Fishing, hunting, grazing, mining, timber harvesting, and recreation are authorized at all three forests.

## Cibola National Forest

The Cibola National Forest is one of seven national forests with lands in New Mexico. The forest's name came into existence in 1931 when President Hoover changed the name of the Manzano National Forest to the Cibola National Forest. The Cibola is a collection of mountain ranges scattered east and south of Albuquerque and west to the border with Arizona. About 8 percent of the forest's lands (138,000 acres) is designated as wilderness. The Cibola also manages more than 260,000 acres of national grasslands in northeastern New Mexico, western Oklahoma, and northwestern Texas. One portion of the Cibola shares a common border with the El Malpais National Monument.

<sup>7</sup>Because the Nantahala National Forest and the Pisgah National Forest operate under one Land and Resource Management Plan, we refer to them as the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest in this report.

**Manti-La Sal National Forest**

The Manti-La Sal National Forest is one of nine national forests with lands in Utah. It was formed through the combination of three forests—the Manti, the Monticello, and the La Sal. In 1908, the La Sal and Monticello forests merged as the La Sal. In 1949, the Manti and La Sal forests consolidated initially as the Manti and later it became the Manti-La Sal National Forest. The Manti-La Sal is located in segments in central and southeastern Utah and has a small portion that extends into Colorado.

Low-sulfur coal is plentiful on one portion of the forest. In 1995 the Manti-La Sal produced roughly 85 percent of the low-sulfur coal mined in Utah. The forest contains 3,400 documented archaeological (cultural) sites, including early drawings, structures, and campsites.

**Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest**

The Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest is located in western North Carolina. Established in 1920, the Nantahala portion is located on the border with both Tennessee and South Carolina and is the largest of the four national forests in North Carolina. The Pisgah portion is on the border with Tennessee. Both adjoin the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The Pisgah, established in 1916, was the first national forest established east of the Mississippi. The 6,500-acre Cradle of Forestry in America is a National Historic Site located within the Pisgah.

Table II.6 provides various data on the three Forest Service units visited.

**Table II.6: Fiscal Year 1995 Data on the FS Units Visited**

	National forest		
	Cibola	Manti-La Sal	Nantahala-Pisgah
Acres	1,631,000	1,266,000	1,031,000
Visitation	1,539,000	942,000	16,419,000
FTEs <sup>a</sup>	163	113	153
Costs	\$17,879,000	\$10,209,000	\$9,127,000
Revenues	\$772,000	\$264,000	\$528,000

Note: The Cibola and the Manti-La Sal each has a Forest Supervisor for the individual forest. In North Carolina, however, the Forest Supervisor covers all forests in the state, and the costs for this office are not attributable to individual forests. Thus, the Nantahala-Pisgah figure excludes any Supervisor costs, but the costs for the Supervisor are included in the figures for the Cibola and Manti-La Sal National Forests.

<sup>a</sup>A full-time equivalent (FTE) equals the number of hours worked divided by the number of compensable hours in a fiscal year.

Source: The agency's data.

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## **Fish and Wildlife Service**

We visited the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Utah, the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico, and the Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina.

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### **Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge**

The Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge is located 15 miles west of Brigham City in northwestern Utah at the mouth of the Bear River, on the Bear River Bay. The refuge receives most of its fresh water from the Bear River. It was created in 1928 to provide a suitable refuge and feeding and breeding grounds for migratory birds. A secondary objective was to protect waterfowl from botulism, sometimes known as western duck sickness. Prior to the refuge's establishment, a 2 million bird die-off occurred in 1910 and a 1.5 million bird die-off was recorded in 1920. Forty percent of the refuge is open to hunting.

In 1983, flooding devastated the refuge. Salt water replaced the fresh water, killing the vegetation; and all of the refuge's buildings, including the office-visitor center, were destroyed. In 1985, an estimated 95 percent of the refuge's lands were still covered by salt water from the Great Salt Lake. Since 1989, the refuge has been in a rebuilding mode.

About 50 percent of the work has been completed on canals and diversion channels, 75 percent of the restoration of 43 miles of dikes, and 80 percent of the water control structures. In addition, work is about 25 percent complete on sub-dividing the existing water impoundment units and constructing new dikes. The refuge's office is currently located off the refuge in Brigham City. However, the refuge hopes to build a new headquarters/education center on refuge lands in the future.

Fishing, hunting, and recreation are authorized in certain areas of the refuge. The refuge has a 12-mile auto tour route for public viewing of the wildlife. Grazing is authorized in certain areas and is done intermittently to enhance wildlife habitat. Mining and timber production are not authorized.

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### **Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge**

In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge as a refuge and a breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. Located in western-central New Mexico in Socorro County, the refuge straddles the Rio Grande about 90 miles south of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The refuge's importance to Canada geese has diminished, while its importance to other birds such as snow geese, ducks, and sandhill cranes has increased. In 1975, the refuge began providing wintering habitat for a special flock of endangered whooping cranes, and all lands on the refuge below 4,600 feet in elevation are legally designated whooping crane critical habitat.

The refuge's roles include ensuring the preservation of the refuge's land and animals, expanding the understanding and appreciation of the environment, providing a variety of wildlife experiences for people, and providing for environmental research. Increased public demand has expanded the refuge's role in providing environmental education and wildlife-oriented recreation. For example, over 90 percent of the visitors to the refuge come for sightseeing, photography, or birdwatching. Fishing, hunting, and recreation are authorized. Fishing, however, is minimal because of the limited waters that are suitable for fisheries. The refuge has no mining, timber production, or grazing.

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## **Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge**

The Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1963 to provide wintering habitat for migratory waterfowl. The refuge is located in two counties in south-central North Carolina roughly 6 miles north of Wadesboro, North Carolina. Forest covers about 6,100 acres (over 70 percent) of the refuge land, and almost 1,200 acres are used as agricultural lands.

Fishing, hunting, and recreation are authorized at the refuge. Mining and grazing are not authorized. This refuge was the only one that we visited that had timber harvesting authorized. However, timber harvesting is done within forest management guidelines for red-cockaded woodpeckers (an endangered species located on the refuge).

Some refuge lands were reestablished in native switch grass. The grass provides a seed source for birds and nesting cover for small game while providing hay for a local dairy farmer. In addition, about 510 acres of soybeans, 620 acres of corn, and 150 acres of winter wheat were planted on refuge lands in 1995, which yielded approximately 15,000 bushels of soybeans, 62,000 bushels of corn, and 4,800 bushels of wheat. The refuge receives a portion of the crop or services from the farmers as payment for the use of the land.

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Table II.7 provides various data about the Bear River, Bosque del Apache, and Pee Dee refuges.

**Table II.7: Fiscal Year 1995 Data on the FWS Units Visited**

	Refuge		
	Bear River	Bosque del Apache	Pee Dee
Acres	72,972 <sup>a</sup>	57,191	8,443
Visitation	18,900	136,000	8,700 <sup>a</sup>
FTEs <sup>b</sup>	7	15	5
Costs	\$770,586	\$1,082,096	\$583,443
Revenues	\$6,354	\$42,054	\$16,416

<sup>a</sup>Calendar year data.

<sup>b</sup>A full-time equivalent (FTE) equals the number of hours worked divided by the number of compensable hours in a fiscal year.

Source: The agency's data.

**National Park Service**

We visited two national parks and one national monument.

**Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

The Act of May 22, 1926, established Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The park straddles the border between Tennessee and North Carolina with about half of the park located in each state.

The park is noted for the diversity of its plant and animal resources, the beauty of its ancient mountains, its remnants of American pioneer culture, and the wilderness sanctuary within its boundaries. Its purpose is to preserve its exceptionally diverse resources and to provide for public benefit and enjoyment of the resources in ways that will leave them essentially unaltered. The uses that are allowed and active are those generally found in parks, including most recreational activities. Timber harvesting, mining, and hunting are prohibited. Some grazing is allowed, but only to maintain the historical look the park is trying to preserve.

**Canyonlands National Park**

Canyonlands National Park was established in 1964. It is located in the heart of the Colorado Plateau in southeastern Utah. Canyonlands is part of the Southeast Utah Group, which includes Arches National Park and Natural Bridges National Monument.

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The park is noted for its canyons, arches, buttes, towers, and other land forms and for its rock art and other remnants of ancient habitation. Its purpose is to preserve its outstanding scenic, scientific, and archaeological resources for public enjoyment. The uses that are allowed and active are those generally found in parks, including most recreational activities. The featured recreational uses include viewing the park's spectacular landscapes, examining its archaeological treasures, driving four-wheel vehicles, hiking, and taking river float trips. Mining, grazing, and hunting are prohibited and some wood cutting is allowed.

**El Malpais National  
Monument**

El Malpais was established on December 31, 1987. It is located in the high desert lands of west-central New Mexico. The monument is noted for its lava flows and related lava tube cave systems. The area also offers a diverse natural environment and evidence of American Indian and European history. The park's purpose is to preserve for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the Grants lava flow, the Las Ventanas Chacoan Outlier Archaeological Site, and other significant natural and cultural resources. The uses that are allowed and active are those generally found in parks, including such recreational activities as hiking and camping; exploring the lava tubes and cultural sites are popular activities. Mining, timber harvesting, and hunting are prohibited, while grazing is being phased out.

Table II.8 provides overview information on the NPS units visited.

**Table II.8: Fiscal Year 1995 Data on the  
NPS Units Visited**

	National park		National monument
	Canyonlands	Great Smoky Mountains	El Malpais
Acres	338,000	521,000	114,000
Visitation	453,000	8,948,000	97,000
FTEs <sup>a</sup>	87	275	15
Costs	\$4,454,000	\$13,171,000	\$1,238,000
Revenues <sup>b</sup>	\$276,000	\$733,000	0

<sup>a</sup>A full-time equivalent (FTE) equals the number of hours worked divided by the number of compensable hours in a fiscal year.

<sup>b</sup>Revenues from fees.

Source: The agency's data.

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# Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

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Five congressional members asked us to obtain information on land management activities at units of six federal agencies—the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service (FS); the Department of the Army’s Corps of Engineers (Corps); and the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and National Park Service (NPS). Specifically, they asked us to (1) identify the land management activities carried out at individual units of these agencies and identify common activities across the agencies, (2) describe the changes over the last 25 years in the missions and activities these agencies and units carry out, and (3) provide information on the costs to operate these units and the revenues they generated.

In performing our work, we visited 14 land management units, which included parks, forests, and refuges. We interviewed unit officials and obtained and reviewed documents and other data, including land and resource management plans, annual reports, and environmental assessments. In addition, we met with and obtained documentation from agency officials at headquarters and other organizational levels within each agency. We also reviewed legislation creating the agencies and their specific units.

To identify the land management activities performed by units of these agencies, we selected three states, identified units within the states, and identified activities at each unit. We selected Utah and New Mexico because they include units for most of the six land management agencies and because they had comparable state-managed land units. We added North Carolina to provide the perspective of an eastern state that also had comparable state-managed units.

In each state, we chose units with large land areas that, when possible, were also located close to each other. In Utah and New Mexico, we selected one unit in each state for each agency, except for the Corps, which did not have a unit in Utah. Prior to selecting a third state, we agreed to exclude units of BOR and the Corps because our initial work with these agencies showed that they are primarily water-management agencies that have substantially different land management responsibilities than the other four agencies. Subsequently, we selected North Carolina, where we chose units of FS, FWS, and NPS. BLM does not manage any land in the state. Because our work was performed in a limited number of states and units within those states, we recognize that the results cannot be used to make generalized statements about all units in an agency.



To identify the land management activities at the various units, we obtained expenditure reports for each unit. On the basis of these data, we identified activities with the largest costs which, in total, accounted for approximately 60 percent of each unit's fiscal year 1995 costs. We selected fiscal year 1995 cost data because it was the latest year for which complete data were available when we initiated our review. We excluded general administration, which in some cases was a major expenditure, because we did not consider it a specific land management activity. Expenditure reports for some units did not provide sufficient detail for us to identify the costs for various specific activities. For those units, we asked unit managers to identify the major activities for us.

From the activities meeting the above criteria, we selected those that were performed at units in half or more of the agencies, and we consider them to be common activities. To describe these common activities, we identified typical tasks that unit staff performed in carrying out these activities. We obtained the information from discussions with unit management and staff and our review of unit documents.

To determine changes in the agencies' objectives and activities, we reviewed legislation; obtained and reviewed agency and unit documents, such as plans and historical summaries; and interviewed unit officials about the changes. To obtain unit costs and revenues for fiscal year 1995, we requested and obtained the data from either the individual unit or from the agency's financial center. We did not independently verify these data.

# Major Contributors to This Report

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Robert Cronin  
Paul Grace  
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