



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

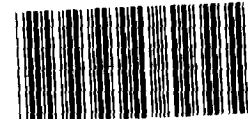
118541
~~118541~~
~~21453~~

PROCUREMENT, LOGISTICS,
AND READINESS DIVISION

B-207225

MAY 12, 1982

The Honorable Frank R. Wolf
House of Representatives



118347

Dear Mr. Wolf:

Subject: Federal Water Conservation in the
Metropolitan Washington Area
(GAO/PLRD-82-78)

In March 1982, you asked us to review and report on suggestions by one of your constituents on ways to conserve water and reduce water costs to the Federal Government in the Metropolitan Washington area. On April 15, 1982, we briefed your Office on the preliminary results of our work. As a result of that briefing, your Office asked us to provide you a written report on the information we had gathered.

We obtained our information from files of the General Services Administration's (GSA's) National Capital Region and through conversations with appropriate regional office officials. We did not verify the information.

GSA shares your constituent's concern over water conservation. In 1978 GSA established a water conservation program which reduced GSA's water consumption from 5.2 billion gallons in 1977 to 4.6 billion gallons in 1980 (a 12.5-percent reduction). More pertinent, GSA's National Capital Region reduced its consumption from 2.6 billion gallons in 1977 to 1.7 billion gallons in 1981 (a 32-percent reduction).

To reduce water consumption in the National Capital Region, GSA has undertaken a variety of water conservation measures, including:

- Replacing worn spigots.
- Installing water conserving devices, such as self-closing spigots and automatic cooling tower bleed offs.
- Recirculating fountain water.

(945614)

625

In regards to the single pass, water-cooled air-conditioning systems mentioned in your constituent's letter, a National Capital Region official told us that GSA is aware of only one such system, using city water, in operation in the region. That system is small and is located in the White House. GSA has replaced single pass systems in the Pension Building, the 2430 East Street Building, and the State Department in the District of Columbia and the Central Intelligence Agency Headquarters building in McLean, Virginia. Other systems in use at the Pentagon, Archives, and Interstate Commerce Commission/Customs buildings use water pumped from and returned to either the Potomac River or the Tidal Basin. GSA's handbook on operation and maintenance of real property restricts the installation of single pass, water-cooled air-conditioning systems using city water to small ones.

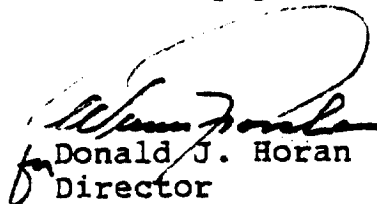
Federal buildings in Washington's Maryland and Virginia suburbs are individually metered for water as any other commercial or private customer. In the District of Columbia, where water is provided by the District's Department of Environmental Services, GSA has 88 buildings or building complexes that have water meters. Meter readings serve as the primary basis for annual water consumption reports, which are part of GSA's water conservation program. According to a GSA official, making agencies responsible for their water consumption would not be practical because, in many instances, more than one agency is located in a building or building complex served by a single meter. Therefore, determining responsibility for water consumption would be difficult. In addition, water consumption is one of the factors considered in determining the standard level users charge.

In view of the above information, and as agreed with your Office, we do not plan to pursue this matter further.

- - - -

We did not obtain GSA comments on matters discussed in this report. We are sending copies of this report to the Administrator of General Services.

Sincerely yours,


for Donald J. Horan
Director