United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Chief Information Officer

1400 Independence Avenue SW

Washington, DC 20250

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TO: Agency Chief Information Officers
Agency Information System Security Managers

FROM: Lynn Allen
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Cyber Security

SUBJECT: Unauthorized Peer to Peer (P2P) Programs on Government Computers

This memo reminds all employees that the use of Peer-to-Peer (P2P) software is prohibited on all USDA equipment and networks without explicit authorization. The "Limited Personal Use Policy" defined in DR 3300-1 is not justification for downloading P2P or other programs that perform those functions.

P2P is a protocol often used to obtain freeware, shareware, and bootleg software. Instant Messaging/Telephony allows users to chat via text messaging in real time in addition to sharing files and initiating telephone calls over the Internet. File sharing and gaming allows users to search each other's hard drives for specific files or information. Some P2P applications allow computer users to directly access files from another hard drive such as music (mp3), movies, and documents.

The following list gives examples of some P2P software divided by category.

Instant Messaging /Telephony

- Yahoo Messenger
- Windows Messenger
- Skype
- MSN Messenger
- AOL Instant Messenger

File Sharing

- Bit Torrent
- Gnutelle
- Kazaa
- WinMX
- Napster
- PC Anywhere
- Edonkey
- Morpheus
- EMule
- Limewire
- BearShare
- Timbuktu

P2P file sharing can potentially compromise computer systems. The use of this software creates vulnerabilities which can be exploited by providing a means of introducing malicious code and other illegal material into a Government network. In addition, the software can allow inadvertent sharing of files through misconfiguration of the software.

To enforce Department Manual DM3525-002 "Internet Use & Copyright Restrictions," USDA Cyber Security is monitoring all USDA networks for P2P traffic. Upon detection of this traffic, the ISSPMs will be notified via the Incident Handling Process.

If an exception to this policy is required, the justification must demonstrate the valid business requirement. All such requests must be sent to lynn.allen2@usda.gov.