

GAO

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August 1996

# NATURAL RESOURCES

## Five-Year Bibliography 1991-1995



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# Preface

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The General Accounting Office (GAO), an arm of the Congress, was established to provide independent oversight of federal programs and activities. GAO's Natural Resources Issue Area examined the activities of such entities as the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, the Commerce Department's National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Issue Area's work generally focused on (1) increasing revenues by obtaining a better return for the sale or use of natural resources on federal lands or by eliminating federal subsidies, (2) improving efficiency within and coordination among federal land management agencies, and (3) improving collaboration and consensus building among federal and nonfederal stakeholders to address problems or issues related to natural resources. In December 1995, the Natural Resources Issue Area was combined with the Energy and Science Issue Area to create the Energy, Resources, and Science Issue Area.

Organized into seven areas, this 5-year bibliography lists the natural resources-related products issued from January 1991 through December 1995. The products are listed chronologically, with the most recent reports first. To help you locate individual reports, a subject index is located in the back of this document.

Questions can be directed to me at the U. S. General Accounting Office, Room 2440, 441 G Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20548. I can also be reached on (202) 512-3841 or on the Internet at [rezendesv.rced@gao.gov](mailto:rezendesv.rced@gao.gov). Readers interested in ordering documents or in requesting bibliographic searches on a specific topic should call the Document Handling and Information Service at (202) 521-6000 or fax a request to (301) 258-4066. A mailing list request form is included in the back of this document; single copies of products are free of charge.



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# Contents

Preface	1
Federal Land Ownership and Management, Parks and Recreation	4
Natural Resources Protection	32
Public Lands Management, Mining Control and Reclamation	50
Oil and Gas, Minerals Resources	66
Water Resources	80
Timber Management	93
Native Americans, Bureau of Indian Affairs	103
Subject Index	125

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**Abbreviations**

BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
AML	Abandoned Mine Land
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CUP	Central Utah Project
DOE	Department of Energy
EOR	Enhanced Oil Recovery
FDIC	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FFS	Federal Financial System
FY	Fiscal Year
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service
GAO	General Accounting Office
I&D	Irrigation and Drainage
IHS	Indian Health Service
IIM	Individual Indian Money
JOBS	Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training
JTAC	Garrison Unit Joint Tribal Advisory Committee
M&I	Municipal and Industrial
MMBF	Million Board Feet
MMS	Minerals Management Service
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA	National Atmospheric and Oceanographic Administration
NPR	Naval Petroleum Reserve
NPR-1	Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 1
NPRC	Naval Petroleum Reserves-California
NPS	National Park Service
NRDC	National Resources Defense Council
OSMRE	Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement
RAMP	Rural Abandoned Mine Land Program
RCED	Resources, Community, and Economic Division
RDA	Rural Development Administration
SEIS	Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
SMCRA	Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act
TAPS	Trans-Alaska Pipeline System
TSPIRS	Timber Sale Program Information Reporting System
USDA	Department of Agriculture

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# Federal Land Ownership and Management, Parks and Recreation

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**NPS Projected Returns from Concessioners.** GAO/RCED-96-48R.  
November 28, 1995.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO examined the assumptions that the National Park Service (NPS) used to project future financial returns to the government from concessioners through year 2002. GAO noted that NPS: (1) overstated its projections of future returns under the Concessions Policy Act by assuming it could increase franchise fees as contracts expired and that monies and franchise fees would remain in the same proportions; (2) overstated its projections of future returns under H.R. 773 and S. 309 by assuming that the bills would increase competition and that it would gradually extinguish the concessioners' proccessory interest; and (3) understated its projections of future returns under H.R. 2491 by assuming that the bill's performance incentive would impede competition.

**Land Management Systems: Progress and Risks in Developing BLM's Land and Mineral Record System.** GAO/AIMD-95-180. August 31, 1995.

ABSTRACT: The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Automated Land and Mineral Record System/Modernization, which is estimated to cost \$428 million, is intended to improve BLM's ability to record, maintain, and retrieve land description, ownership, and use information. To date, the Bureau has been completing most of the project's tasks according to the schedule milestones set in 1993. In coming months, the work will become more difficult as BLM and the primary contractor try to complete, integrate, and test the new software system and meet the current schedule. The Bureau is trying to maintain the project schedule, but slippages may yet occur because little time was allocated to deal with unanticipated problems. BLM recently sought to obtain independent verification and validation to ensure that the new system software meets the Bureau's requirements. A key risk remains, however. BLM's plans include stress testing only a portion of the Automated Land and Mineral Record System/Modernization, rather than the entire project, to ensure that all systems and technology can successfully process workloads expected during peak operating periods. By limiting the stress test, BLM cannot be certain that the system's information technology will perform as intended during peak workloads.

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**National Parks: Difficult Choices Need to Be Made About the Future of the Parks.** GAO/RCED-95-238. August 30, 1995.

ABSTRACT: GAO concludes that there is cause for concern about the health of national parks. Visitor services were deteriorating at most of the park units that GAO reviewed. Services were being cut back, and the condition of many trails, campgrounds, and other facilities was declining. Trends in resource management were less clear because most park managers lacked enough data to determine the overall condition of their parks' natural and cultural resources. In some cases, parks lacked an inventory of the resources under their protection. Two factors strongly affected the levels of visitor services and the management of park resources—(1) additional operating requirements placed on parks by laws and administrative requirements and (2) increased visitation, which drives up the parks' operating costs. These two factors seriously eroded funding increases since the mid-1980s. The national park system is at a crossroads. Although the system continues to grow, conditions at the parks have been deteriorating and the dollar amount of the maintenance backlog has soared from \$1.9 billion in 1988 to more than \$4 billion today. Congress is faced with the following difficult policy choices: (1) increasing the amount of financial resources going to the parks, (2) limiting or reducing the number of units in the park system, and (3) reducing the level of visitor services. The Park Service should be able to stretch available resources by operating more efficiently and by improving its financial management and performance measuring systems.

**Federal Lands: Information on the Use and Impact of Off-Highway Vehicles.** GAO/RCED-95-209. August 18, 1995.

ABSTRACT: Executive orders were issued during the 1970s regulating the use of off-highway vehicles, including motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, and four-wheel drive vehicles, on federal lands. Sometimes these vehicles damaged natural or cultural resources, or their use clashed with other outdoor recreation activities, such as hiking, picnicking, or horseback riding. Compliance by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Forest Service with the two executive orders has been mixed. According to off-highway vehicle program managers and staff at eight locations GAO visited, both agencies have given higher priority to other activities and have allocated limited funding and staffing to their off-highway vehicle programs. Further, both agencies have relied heavily on state support for their off-highway vehicle programs. Should such support waiver or cease in the future, the agencies' ability to comply with the executive orders

would be further hampered. Some BLM and Forest Service locations have targeted their monitoring and enforcement to the most heavily used or the most environmentally sensitive lands. Also, some have formed coalitions with state governments, local communities, and private groups to supplement their resources for off-highway vehicle programs. As the agencies continue to inventory, map, and post signs to identify their off-highway vehicle areas, roads, and trails, they should be able to implement the executive orders more fully.

**Natural Resources Management Issue Area Plan: Fiscal Years 1996-97.** GAO/IAP-95-16. August 1, 1995.

BACKGROUND: GAO presented its Natural Resources Management issue area plan for fiscal years 1996 through 1997. FINDINGS: GAO plans to assess: (1) ways to obtain a better return on the sale or use of natural resources on federal lands or eliminate or reduce federal subsidies; (2) efficiency improvements within and coordination among the four primary federal land management agencies; (3) improvements in collaboration and consensus-building among federal and nonfederal stakeholders to address problems or issues related to natural resources; and (4) whether agencies are meeting existing production and conservation requirements.

**Federal Lands: Views on Reform of Recreation Concessioners.** GAO/T-RCED-95-250. July 25, 1995.

ABSTRACT: This testimony summarizes GAO's work on federal policy governing the recreation concessioners and provides GAO's views on four bills pending before Congress. Federal agencies' concessions policies and practices are based on at least 11 different laws and, as a result, vary considerably. GAO concludes that more competition is needed in awarding concessions contracts and that the federal government needs to obtain a better return from concessioners for the use of its lands, including obtaining fair market value for the fees it charges ski operators. GAO supports the changes proposed by the four bills to current concessions policies and practices.



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**National Parks: Views on the Denver Service Center and Information on Related Construction Activities.** GAO/RCED-95-79.  
June 23, 1995.

ABSTRACT: One of the major organizational units of the National Park Service is the Denver Service Center, which supports construction activities throughout the park system. The Center works with individual parks in planning, designing, and building projects, which range from rehabilitating historic structures to building new visitor centers to repairing and replacing utility systems. Parks are expected to use the Center's services for projects costing more than \$250,000, although exceptions are granted if the parks have the expertise needed for the projects and they receive approval from Park Service headquarters. In response to congressional concerns about the quality of services provided by the Center, GAO surveyed park managers on the quality and the timeliness of those services. This report also (1) describes how the Park Service sets priorities for funding construction projects and how the priorities may be modified during congressional consideration of the Park Service's annual appropriations requests, (2) describes the process the Park Service uses to develop cost estimates for projects, and (3) provides information on the makeup of projects' contingency and supervision funds.

**National Park Service: Difficult Choices Need to Be Made on the Future of the Parks.** GAO/T-RCED-95-124. March 7, 1995.

ABSTRACT: The overall level of visitor services offered by the National Park Service is deteriorating. Visitor services are being cut back and the condition of many trails, campgrounds, exhibits, and other facilities is declining. The Park Service estimates that since 1988 the backlog of deferred maintenance has more than doubled to \$4 billion. The following two factors have had a major impact on the level of visitor services and resource management activities: (1) additional operating requirements resulting from more than 20 federal laws affecting the parks and (2) an increase in the number of visitors. Since substantial increases in appropriations seem unlikely in today's tight budget climate, difficult choices must be made on the future of the national parks. These choices involve generating more revenue within the parks, limiting the number of parks in the system, and reducing the level of visitor services and expectations.

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**Federal Lands: Information on Land Owned and on Acreage with Conservation Restrictions.** GAO/T-RCED-95-117. March 2, 1995.

ABSTRACT: During fiscal years 1964-93, the amount of federal land managed by the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service decreased by 77 million acres, from about 700 million acres to about 623 million acres. However, the decrease is skewed because of two unique land transfers in Alaska—the transfer of about 76 million acres of federal land to the state of Alaska in accordance with the Alaska Statehood Act of 1958 and the transfer of about 36 million acres to native Alaskans in accordance with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. Excluding these two large land transfers, the amount of land managed by the four agencies actually increased by 34 million acres. During the same 29-year period, the number of acres managed by the four agencies that were set aside for conservation purposes increased from about 51 million acres at the end of fiscal year 1964 to about 271 million acres at the end of fiscal year 1993.

**National Park Service: Better Management and Broader Restructuring Efforts Are Needed.** GAO/T-RCED-95-101. February 9, 1995.

ABSTRACT: The National Park Service lacks necessary financial data, internal controls, and performance measures that would allow the agency to shift resources among competing goals, rank priorities so that the most pressing issues receive attention, and link the agency's planning process directly to budget decisions to better allocate resources. Although the Park Service's restructuring plan addresses some of the challenges facing the agency, such as the need to meet the demands of an expanding system, growing numbers of visitors, and increasingly complex resource protection problems, the plan does not address the potential to improve operations through land management collaboration among Interior's three land management agencies and Agriculture's Forest Service. It also does not consider which functions or programs could be eliminated or turned over to state or local governments or to the private sector.

**National Parks: Information on the Condition of Civil War Monuments at Selected Sites.** GAO/RCED-95-80FS. February 1, 1995.

ABSTRACT: National Park Service records show that 98 percent of the 2,510 monuments at the 11 Civil War battlefield parks GAO reviewed are in good or fair condition, meaning that they need little or no repair. The remaining two percent—54 monuments—are in poor shape, with statuary

and pedestals suffering from the following problems: broken or missing parts, chips and cracks, and wear and erosion. The most common causes of these problems are weathering and vandalism. Other causes include erosion, structural deficiencies, and neglect. Park officials estimate the cost to repair 34 of the monuments at \$2,403,000. Cost estimates were not provided for the other 20 monuments because officials were unsure what work was needed or how much it would run.

**Federal Lands: Information on Land Owned and on Acreage with Conservation Restrictions.** GAO/RCED-95-73FS. January 30, 1995.

ABSTRACT: During fiscal years 1964-93, the amount of federal land managed by the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service decreased by 77 million acres, from about 700 million acres to about 623 million acres. However, the decrease is skewed because of two unique land transfers in Alaska—the transfer of about 76 million acres of federal land to the state of Alaska in accordance with the Alaska Statehood Act of 1958 and the transfer of about 36 million acres to native Alaskans in accordance with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. Excluding these two large land transfers, the amount of land managed by the four agencies actually increased by 34 million acres. During the same 29-year period, the number of acres managed by the four agencies that were set aside for conservation purposes increased from about 51 million acres at the end of fiscal year 1964 to about 271 million acres at the end of fiscal year 1993. GAO summarized this report in testimony before Congress; see: Federal Lands: Information on Land Owned and on Acreage With Conservation Restrictions, by John H. Anderson, Jr., Associate Director for Natural Resources Management Issues, before the House Committee on Resources. GAO/T-RCED-95-117, Mar. 2, 1995 (11 pages).

**Monuments at Vicksburg National Military Park.** GAO/RCED-95-55R. November 15, 1994.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on the overall condition of the monuments at Vicksburg National Military Park, focusing on the cost estimates for replacing or repairing monuments in poor condition. GAO noted that: (1) most of the 640 monuments at Vicksburg are in good or fair condition and need no repair or rehabilitation; (2) 2 of the monuments at Vicksburg are in poor condition and need substantial repair; and (3) National Park Service

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officials estimate that it could cost more than \$1 million to repair one of the monuments and \$3,200 to \$4,000 to repair the other monument.

**Forest Service: Land Acquisitions Within the Lake Tahoe Basin.**

GAO/RCED-95-22. October 31, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The Santini-Burton Act, enacted in 1980, authorized the sale of about 7,000 acres of federal lands within Clark County, Nevada, to allow more orderly development of the communities there. The federal lands were owned by the Bureau of Land Management. The act also required the bulk of the proceeds from the land sales to be used for a buyout program in which the government would purchase environmentally sensitive private lands around Lake Tahoe in an effort to stem further degradation of the lake. Concerns have been raised about whether property owners in the Lake Tahoe Basin have been treated fairly when the lands were acquired under the act. This report determines the extent to which (1) the Forest Service acquired lands within the basin under the act's buyout program, (2) the classification of lands within the basin as environmentally sensitive may have harmed their value, and (3) the Forest Service's acquisition of environmentally sensitive land in the basin may have involved the federal government taking private property under the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

**National Park Service: Reexamination of Employee Housing Program Is Needed.** GAO/RCED-94-284. August 30, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Since 1916, the National Park Service has provided rental housing in parks to many of its employees. The Park Service has an inventory today of about 4,700 housing units. Nearly half of the housing inventory is more than 30 years old. Park Service estimates of what it would cost to repair, rehabilitate, repair, and replace this housing inventory have increased significantly during the past several years; the total estimate is now more than half a billion dollars. This report (1) describes the Park Service's housing program and compares it with the housing programs run by two other large land management agencies—the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management—and (2) identifies options that are available to the Park Service to deal with its housing problems.

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**Federal Lands: Fees for Communications Sites Are Below Fair Market Value.** GAO/RCED-94-248. July 12, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are the two major federal agencies whose lands are used as sites to broadcast radio, television, and other electronic signals. These sites, mainly located in the western United States, are for the most part leased to private entities that build and operate communications facilities. The annual fees being charged for such communications sites are, in many cases, significantly below fair market value. Forest Service and BLM officials estimate that charging fees on the basis of fair market value would boost total federal revenues by more than 500 percent—from about \$4 million to about \$23 million annually. Although the Forest Service and BLM have been trying to set fees reflecting fair market value, annual appropriations legislation has limited the amount by which these fees can be increased. As long as these limits are in effect, the fees charged will not reflect fair market value. Both the Forest Service and BLM lack reliable and complete information needed to manage their communications site programs. In addition, many unauthorized communications users are operating on Forest Service lands, and annual inspections to ensure that the sites are properly maintained are rarely done. GAO summarized this report in testimony before Congress; see: Federal Lands: Fees for Communications Sites Are Below Fair Market Value, by John H. Anderson, Jr., Associate Director for Natural Resources Management Issues, before the Subcommittee on the Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources, House Committee on Government Operations, and the Subcommittee on Natural Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, House Committee on Natural Resources. GAO/T-RCED-94-262, July 12 (13 pages).

**Federal Lands: Fees for Communications Sites Are Below Fair Market Value.** GAO/T-RCED-94-262. July 12, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are the two major federal agencies whose lands are used as sites to broadcast radio, television, and other electronic signals. These sites, mainly located in the western United States, are for the most part leased to private entities that build and operate communications facilities. The annual fees being charged for such communications sites are, in many cases, significantly below fair market value. Forest Service and BLM officials estimates that charging fees on the basis of fair market value would boost total federal revenues by more than 500 percent—from about \$4 million to about \$23 million annually. Although the Forest Service and

BLM have been trying to set fees reflecting fair market value, annual appropriations legislation has limited the amount by which these fees can be increased. As long as these limits are in effect, the fees charged will not reflect fair market value. Both the Forest Service and BLM lack reliable and complete information needed to manage their communications site programs. In addition, many unauthorized communications users are operating on Forest Service lands, and annual inspections to ensure that the sites are properly maintained are rarely done.

**Natural Resources: Lessons Learned Regarding Public Land Withdrawn for Military Use.** GAO/T-NSIAD-94-227. June 29, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Military operations had not been hampered at the six withdrawn sites GAO visited in Alaska, Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico, but these operations had constrained resource management activities. Military commanders at five of the sites said that they changed some training exercises to accommodate concerns for wildlife; at one site, officials expressed concern about meeting training needs because of environmental constraints. However, the Defense Department restricted access to three sites, making it difficult for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to carry out resource management activities. Such restrictions and the overall military presence have led BLM to assign a low priority to resource management on military lands. A lack of information on resource conditions prevents an overall assessment of the impacts. The six sites could improve resource management by enhancing interagency cooperation and by strengthening systems to monitor resource management actions. Resource management at the Goldwater Range in Arizona was an example of effective cooperation between BLM and the military.

**Federal Lands: Land Acquisitions Involving Nonprofit Conservation Organizations.** GAO/RCED-94-149. June 15, 1994.

ABSTRACT: In May 1992, the Interior Department's Office of Inspector General reported on problems it found with land acquisitions between nonprofit conservation organizations and three federal agencies—the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service. The Inspector General said that the prices for some acquisitions exceeded fair market values, the related land appraisals were sometimes out of date or were not well reviewed, and nonprofits reaped financial windfalls on land acquisitions by the Interior Department. This report discusses the (1) extent to which agencies other than the Interior

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Department buy land from or with the help of nonprofits, (2) adequacy of controls for protecting the government's interest in such acquisitions, and (3) extent to which nonprofits realize large financial gains in such transactions.

**Hawaiian Homelands: Hawaii's Efforts to Address Land Use Issues.**

GAO/RCED-94-24. May 26, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Although the Interior and Justice Departments maintain that the federal government has never had a trust responsibility to native Hawaiians, the state of Hawaii disagrees. Hawaiian state courts and the state's Attorney General have concluded that the federal government had a trust responsibility during the territorial period, and the state's Attorney General believes that such a responsibility continues today. In GAO's opinion, territorial governors lacked authority to withdraw Hawaiian homelands for nonfederal public purposes through executive orders and proclamations. However, many of these unauthorized withdrawals appear to have (1) benefitted native Hawaiians or (2) involved lands that were unsuitable for authorized homeland uses, such as homesteading or leasing, during the territorial period. Territorial governors also lacked authority under the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act to withdraw homelands for federal purposes through executive orders or other means. Because such withdrawals took place more than 50 years ago, there is no guarantee that all information relevant to these withdrawals is still available. Therefore, GAO is unable to express an opinion on the propriety of homeland withdrawals for federal purposes. GAO believes that the methodology used by a consultant to the state to estimate the lost income from and the current market value for parcels of lands was generally reasonable.

**Natural Resources: Defense and Interior Can Better Manage Land Withdrawn for Military Use.**

GAO/NSIAD-94-87. April 26, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 1986 removes from public use until the year 2001 more than 7 million acres and makes them available to the military for training and weapons and equipment testing. GAO reviewed the experiences at the six sites named in the act, which are located in Alaska, Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico, and found that resource management results have been mixed. Military operations have not been hampered, but military commanders have changed some training exercises to accommodate concerns for wildlife. Five of the six sites had resource management plans, but only about half of the planned actions had been started as of November 1993. Three sites had access restrictions

that made it hard for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to carry out resource management activities. These restrictions and the military presence led BLM to assign a low priority to resource management on military land. At three sites, BLM allocated considerably less money to manage lands used for military training than for other property under its care. All six sites had opportunities to improve resource management by strengthening cooperation between BLM and the military and by beefing up monitoring of progress on planned resource management actions. This report includes photographs of the terrain at the six sites.

**Hurricane Iniki Expenditures.** GAO/RCED-94-132R. April 18, 1994.

BACKGROUND: GAO reviewed whether the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) used emergency appropriated funds for the repair and replacement of national wildlife refuge facilities damaged by Hurricane Iniki. GAO noted that: (1) FWS did not have authorization to use emergency funds for reconstruction work at two refuges; (2) FWS planned to use emergency funds for enlarging selected buildings at one refuge and remodeling the visitors' center at another refuge; (3) approximately \$12.8 million in emergency disaster assistance was appropriated to FWS for construction projects; and (4) of the amount appropriated, FWS allocated \$6.2 million for the rehabilitation of the refuges.

**Forest Service Management: Issues To Be Considered in Developing a New Stewardship Strategy.** GAO/T-RCED-94-116. February 1, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Budgetary constraints and scientific findings on ecosystem management will challenge the Forest Service as never before to find new ways to achieve program goals with fewer resources. GAO testified that the Forest Service needs to work closely with Congress to get a better return on the sale or use of natural resources on public lands. It also needs to work with Congress and other federal land management agencies to find ways to work more efficiently and to manage federal lands so as to preserve the nation's natural resources and sustain their long-term economic productivity. GAO believes that a coordinated interagency strategy may be needed to link Forest Service reforms to changes being considered by other federal land management agencies. The goal would be to coordinate and integrate these programs, activities, and functions so that these agencies can function as a unit on the local level.



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**The Gettysburg Address: Issues Related to Display and Preservation.** GAO/RCED-94-12. January 26, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Of the five known original manuscripts of the Gettysburg Address, two are in the collection of the Library of Congress. Since 1979, the Library's two drafts have been displayed during the spring and the summer at the Gettysburg National Military Park, which is run by the Park Service. The Library plans to substitute a high-quality facsimile for display at the park after 1994, a move the Park Service opposes. This report discusses (1) the risks inherent in exhibiting a draft at the park or elsewhere, (2) whether the Park Service has met the Library's exhibition and preservation requirements and can meet future requirements, and (3) the estimated cost of exhibiting the document at the park in the current or an upgraded facility versus the cost of building a comparable facility at the Library. GAO notes that exhibiting the drafts at the park has allowed millions of Americans to see the original documents in a historic setting and that the Park Service seems capable of meeting evolving exhibition and preservation requirements. The conference report accompanying the fiscal year 1994 legislative branch appropriations act supports exhibiting an original draft in Gettysburg and encourages the Library and the Park Service to reopen discussions on extending the loan of the address. Ultimately, it is Congress' call as to where the drafts should be displayed.

**National Park Service: Activities Outside Park Borders Have Caused Damage to Resources and Will Likely Cause More.**

GAO/RCED-94-59. January 3, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Activities outside the boundaries of the national parks, including pollution generated by power plants and manufacturers, are threatening unique natural and cultural resources. The Park Service, however, is unaware of the extent to which these resources are being threatened because it does not maintain an inventory of the number, types, and sources of threats or the damage caused. The Park Service needs this information to pinpoint and counter the most urgent threats. The Park Service has a resource planning system to identify resource management problems but does not use it to identify and inventory threats. GAO surveyed park managers, who identified more than 600 threats that fell into the following categories: urban encroachment, water quantity and quality issues, air pollution, and human activities. Park managers claim that about two-thirds of the threats have already resulted in damage, including diminished scenic views, polluted streams, and destruction of

wildlife and habitat. Furthermore, they expect that virtually all of the threats will inflict additional damage during the next five years. Although park managers say that action has been taken to counter more than half of the threats, this typically involved community outreach, which requires the cooperation of multiple parties and often is the first step toward minimizing damage to park resources.

**Federal Lands: Public Land Access.** GAO/T-RCED-94-72. November 9, 1993.

ABSTRACT: According to managers at the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), access to more than 50 million acres of public land in the United States is inadequate, a situation that can potentially reduce the public's recreational opportunities and interfere with the government's land management. Private landowners are increasingly unwilling to grant public access across their land because of concerns about vandalism and potential liability or because of desires for privacy or exclusive personal use. To overcome access problems, the Forest Service and BLM may acquire all rights and interests associated with the land or obtain perpetual easements. In fiscal years 1989-91, the Forest Service and BLM acquired permanent legal public access to about 4.5 million acres of federal land. The two agencies had plans as of October 1991 to open another 9.3 million acres of federal land to the public.

**Fisheries Management: Administration of the Sport Fish Restoration Program.** GAO/RCED-94-4. November 8, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The long-term decline in the quality of sport fishing in the United States prompted the creation in 1950 of the Sport Fish Restoration Program, which seeks to restore, conserve, and enhance the nation's sport fishery resources. During fiscal years 1998-92, the program received nearly \$1 billion in federal funding. In response to congressional concerns about the program's rapid expansion and about whether program money was being used for its intended purposes, this report determines (1) the extent to which the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) used these funds to run the program, (2) whether FWS' use of program funds for special investigations helped the agency to achieve the program's goals, (3) whether the states allocated the required amount of funds to freshwater and marine projects, and (4) the extent to which the states programmed funds to enhance fish habitat. GAO limited its review to five coastal states—California, Florida, North Carolina, Texas, and Washington—that historically have either received the largest apportionments of program funds or have underwritten a diverse range of sport fish projects.

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**Department of the Interior: Transfer of the Presidio From the Army to the National Park Service.** GAO/RCED-94-61. October 26, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The proposed uses of the Presidio Army Post under the Park Service's preferred alternative are generally consistent with the goal of creating a Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The extent to which the costs to rehabilitate the Presidio's buildings and run the Presidio will be offset by tenant payments and philanthropic donations, however, is unknown. Thus, the level of future annual appropriations needed to manage the Presidio cannot be estimated with any certainty at this time. Given the costs and the potential impact of the Presidio's rehabilitation on the Park Service's deferred maintenance and reconstruction backlog, close oversight by the Department of the Interior and Congress is warranted. In addition, once an alternative for managing the Presidio is decided upon, the Park Service needs to establish a plan that will (1) prioritize the objectives, (2) identify their associated costs and funding sources, and (3) estimate their completion dates. GAO summarized this report in testimony before Congress; see: Department of the Interior: Transfer of the Presidio From the Army to the National Park Service, by James Duffus III, Director of Natural Resources Management Issues, before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, House Committee on Natural Resources. GAO/T-RCED-94-64, Oct. 26, 1993 (11 pages).

**Department of the Interior: Transfer of the Presidio From the Army to the National Park Service.** GAO/T-RCED-94-64. October 26, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The proposed uses of the Presidio Army Post under the Park Service's preferred alternative are generally consistent with the goal of creating a Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The extent to which the costs to rehabilitate the Presidio's buildings and run the Presidio will be offset by tenant payments and philanthropic donations, however, is unknown. Thus, the level of future annual appropriations needed to manage the Presidio cannot be estimated with any certainty at this time. Given the costs and the potential impact of the Presidio's rehabilitation on the Park Service's deferred maintenance and reconstruction backlog, close oversight by the Department of the Interior and Congress is warranted. In addition, once an alternative for managing the Presidio is decided upon, the Park Service needs to establish a plan that will (1) prioritize the objectives, (2) identify their associated costs and funding sources, and (3) estimate their completion dates.

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**National Park Service: Condition of and Need for Employee Housing.** GAO/RCED-93-192. September 30, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The National Park Service, which has been housing park employees since 1916, now has an inventory of about 5,200 housing units. Park Service records suggest that about 40 percent of this inventory is in “good” or “excellent” condition, needing no more than routine maintenance; about 15 percent was rated “poor” to “obsolete,” requiring extensive repairs. Most of the Park Service housing is used to shelter (1) seasonal employees, (2) permanent employees at isolated parks, and (3) permanent employees at more-accessible parks who provide visitor services or protect government property. GAO questioned the justification for about 12 percent of the units. For example, at 11 nonisolated parks GAO visited, park managers subjectively determined the need for housing instead of relying on an analysis of local housing availability, as required by Park Service guidance. GAO could not verify the accuracy of the Park Service’s \$546 million estimate for employee housing repair and replacement. Park Service officials claim that a sizable backlog of repairs exists because rental income has covered only about half of all maintenance costs and operating funds have not been enough to make up the difference. Rental income has been limited because (1) the Park Service reduces its rates because of factors such as isolation and lack of amenities and (2) Congress has set a cap on rental rate increases.

**Bureau of Reclamation: Unauthorized Recreation Facilities at Two Reclamation Projects.** GAO/RCED-93-115. September 16, 1993.

ABSTRACT: GAO concludes that the Department of the Interior exceeded authorized spending limits when it built recreation facilities at both the Boise Project, a series of reservoirs providing irrigation, hydroelectric power, and flood control in Idaho, and the Minidoka Project, a dam and reservoir located in Idaho and Wyoming. The recreation facilities include recreational vehicle and tent campsites, group picnic shelters, trails, and paved roads and parking lots. Plans are also under way to build a marina complex and a visitor center. In addition, Reclamation has not entered into all of the required cost-sharing agreements with nonfederal entities. As a result, the taxpayers and users of Bonneville hydroelectric power have picked up much of the tab to run the facilities, rather than those who have benefitted from them. Reclamation has avoided congressional scrutiny of the costs to build the recreation facilities by identifying them as minimum public health and safety facilities. In GAO’s view, Reclamation should be

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forced to comply with the law or obtain specific congressional authorization to continue running the facilities at taxpayers' expense.

**Federal Lands: Improvements Needed in Managing Short-Term Concessioners.** GAO/RCED-93-177. September 14, 1993.

ABSTRACT: Nationwide, about 6,000 short-term agreements (of 5 years or less) exist under which concessioners provide goods and services to the public on federal land. The services they provide include sightseeing tours and guided fishing, hunting, and rafting trips. This is one in a series of reports on concessioners' operations on federal recreation land. GAO reviews the federal government's policy and practices for (1) evaluating short-term concessioners' overall performance; (2) ensuring that short-term concessioners comply with federal, state, and local health and safety laws and regulations; (3) ensuring the reasonableness of the prices charged to the public by short-term concessioners; and (4) setting fees for the use of federal land by short-term concessioners.

**Federal Land: Little Progress Made in Improving Oversight of Concessioners.** GAO/T-RCED-93-42. May 27, 1993.

ABSTRACT: Concessioners are often the primary operators in recreation areas containing some of the nation's greatest national treasures. Despite GAO's warnings during the past three years, however, federal agencies are still doing a poor job of managing concessioners on federal land. The agencies lack enough data to adequately manage concession operations, they cannot demonstrate that they are receiving a fair return, and they have to revise or develop some policies to improve their management of concessioners. Deterioration in federal areas is widespread, and the existing infrastructure—approaching \$200 billion in value—is increasingly run down; the cost of deferred maintenance in the national parks and forests alone is nearly \$3 billion. The federal government has a huge investment in its recreation resources, and GAO believes that the government needs to ensure that it is fairly compensated for the use of its land, the visiting public is provided with healthy and safe services, and the nation's recreation resources are adequately protected for future generations.

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**National Park Service: Scope and Cost of America's Industrial Heritage Project Need to Be Defined.** GAO/RCED-93-134. May 14, 1993.

ABSTRACT: America's Industrial Heritage Project consists of several sites scattered throughout southwestern Pennsylvania that will explain how the region's iron and steel, coal, and transportation industries contributed to the nation's industrial growth. The project is expected to revitalize the region's economic base through tourism. Much uncertainty exists, however, about the development and the completion of the project. Although one estimate pegs the cost of completing the project at about \$355 million, including \$155 million in federal funds, this estimate lacks documentation and the final scope of the project has yet to be defined. Uncertainty also exists about the operation and maintenance of project sites on nonfederal land. Although some of the sites will be run by the National Park Service, other projects built on nonfederal land are to be run by nonfederal entities. Yet GAO was told that federal funds will be used for up to 5 years to run several projects on nonfederal land. Finally, it is unclear who will be responsible for managing, operating, and maintaining the projects. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Commission, part of the Interior Department, has been overseeing the project's implementation, but the Commission's term expires in November 1998. Although the Commission favors the establishment of a not-for-profit corporation that would run all the projects, it has yet to make a final choice among the options being considered.

**Forest Service: Little Assurance That Fair Market Value Fees Are Collected From Ski Areas.** GAO/RCED-93-107. April 16, 1993.

ABSTRACT: Ski operators on Forest Service land are required to pay the government fees that are based on fair market values. Although these ski operators had \$737 million in gross sales in 1991, they paid the government only about \$13.5 million in fees. GAO concludes that the current fee system does not ensure that the Forest Service receives fair market values for using its land. When the graduated rate fee system was put into place more than 20 years ago, it was expected that rates would be adjusted periodically to reflect economic changes. Yet the rates by which fees are calculated have not been updated in more than two decades. The fee system developed by the ski industry also does not deliver fees that reflect fair market value. GAO agrees with the Forest Service that a simplified system is desirable. The goal of developing a simpler system, however, must be secondary to ensuring that fees are based on fair market value.

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**Natural Resources Management: Issues to Be Considered by the Congress and Administration.** GAO/T-RCED-93-5. February 2, 1993.

ABSTRACT: This testimony discusses GAO's December 1992 transition series report entitled Natural Resources Management Issues (GAO/OCG-93-17TR). During this era of budgetary constraints, Congress and the new administration face hard choices in how to protect the nation's natural resources. Current funding is inadequate to handle the declining condition of the nation's natural resources and related infrastructure on federal lands. A number of proposals to obtain a better return for the sale or use of natural resources have not succeeded, GAO believes, because (1) the full extent of the staffing and funding shortfalls facing federal natural resources management agencies has not been clearly articulated and (2) the proposals and the dialogue surrounding them have not focused on the need to encourage uses that are compatible with sustaining the nation's natural resources for future generations.

**Natural Resources Management Issues.** GAO/OCG-93-17TR.  
December 1992.

ABSTRACT: This report is part of the transition series, a set of 28 reports summarizing GAO's findings on major problems confronting federal agencies, as well as economic and management issues facing Congress and the incoming Administration. One cluster of transition reports, including those on the budget deficit and investment, addresses broad policy issues affecting government as a whole and its relationship to the economy. Another group of reports addresses issues affecting specific federal agencies, such as the Defense Department and the Internal Revenue Service. A third group of reports looks at cross-cutting management issues—everything from financial management to information management. GAO highlighted many of these problems in a similar set of reports issued in 1988. In some instances, progress has been made; all too often, however, the problems have continued to fester and grow worse. In general, the state of management in the federal government is poor. Too many management ideas—and resulting agency structures and processes—that worked well in the past now hinder the government from responding quickly and effectively to a world in tremendous flux. Most agencies have no strategic vision of the future, lack sound systems to collect and apply financial and program information to gauge operational success and accountability, and too often do without people with the skills necessary to accomplish their missions. The Comptroller General summarized the series in testimony before Congress;

see: Major Issues Facing a New Congress and a New Administration, by Charles A. Bowsher, Comptroller General of the United States, before the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs. GAO/T-OCG-93-1, Jan. 8, 1993 (30 pages).

**National Parks: Issues Involved in the Sale of the Yosemite National Park Concessioner.** GAO/RCED-92-232. September 10, 1992.

ABSTRACT: In response to the Department of the Interior's concerns about foreign ownership of the major concessioner service in Yosemite National Park, the Yosemite Park and Curry Company, owned by a Japanese company, was sold to an American purchaser for \$61.5 million. The new concessioner should have enough revenue to pay the promissory note for the purchase price, cover operating expenses, and make a reasonable profit. GAO has not, however, reviewed the assumptions that the Park Service used to calculate its cash flow projections. Although the new concessioner will be required to implement some portion of the 1980 Yosemite General Management Plan, which seeks to reduce congestion in the park, the Park Service has not yet finalized what those requirements or the associated cost will be. Finally, the transfer of interests in the agreement between the Curry Company's parent firm—MCA, Inc.—and the middleman in the sale—the National Park Foundation—does not constitute a gift to the Foundation. Accordingly, the Foundation's participation in the agreement is unauthorized. Additionally, the Foundation's involvement appears to have been unnecessary to completing the transaction, since Interior is authorized to enter into such transactions directly. The Foundation appears to have been acting on Interior's behalf.

**Arlington National Cemetery: Improvements to the Superintendent's Lodge.** GAO/RCED-92-208. August 13, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Allegations surfaced in 1991 about extravagant remodeling at the superintendent's lodge on the grounds of Arlington National Cemetery. Although GAO has found that the renovations made to the lodge—a 1930s structure housing the superintendent and his family—were reasonable, a lack of internal controls allowed the superintendent to authorize and approve much of the work himself. Expenditures associated with the relocation of the new superintendent were authorized and paid for in accordance with rules and regulations. The Army has acknowledged the potential for abuse arising from these outlays and is developing policies and procedures for repairs and renovations to the lodge that will limit the



authority of the superintendent to approve expenditures. The Army is also reassessing the amount that the superintendent will be required to pay for rent, utilities, and other services.

**National Park Service: Policies and Practices for Determining Concessioners' Building Use Fees.** GAO/T-RCED-92-66. May 21, 1992.

ABSTRACT: While national park concessioners using federally owned facilities—including lodges, restaurants, and horse corrals—report gross revenues of up to tens of millions of dollars, many only pay a pittance for use of these properties. Poor management by the National Park Service and lack of data, however, make it impossible to determine whether the government is getting a fair return on the use of its facilities. A lack of policy guidance has led to inconsistent determinations of building use fees. Furthermore, a lack of complete and centralized data has left the Park Service in a quandary as to how many concession agreements contain the assignment of federally owned facilities; how many federally owned facilities are used by concessioners; and what other agreements have been reached on the repair, maintenance, and improvement of these facilities. As a result of this lack of data, the total compensation for the use of federally owned facilities is unknown.

**Federal Lands: Reasons for and Effects of Inadequate Public Access.** GAO/RCED-92-116BR. April 14, 1992.

ABSTRACT: The public's access to more than 50 million acres, or 14 percent, of the land managed by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is considered inadequate by agency managers. Private landowners' unwillingness to grant public access to their land has increased during the past decade as the public's use of public land has increased. Factors contributing to inadequate access are private landowners' concerns about vandalism and potential liability or their desire for privacy and exclusive personal use. To resolve the public access problem, the Forest Service and BLM can acquire either all rights and interests associated with the land (fee simple acquisition) or perpetual easements (limited controls over the land that are binding on succeeding owners). In fiscal years 1989-91, the Forest Service and BLM acquired permanent, legal public access to about 4.5 million acres of federal land. As of October 1991, the two agencies had about 3,300 actions pending to open another 9.3 million acres of federal land to the public.

**Federal Lands: Oversight of Long-Term Concessioners.**

GAO/RCED-92-128BR. March 20, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Nationwide, the federal government has about 1,500 long-term agreements (five years or more) with private concessioners for recreation services ranging from ski resort operations to raft trips. These concessioners operate on land managed by six federal agencies. This report examines the (1) concessioners' overall performance; (2) concessioners' compliance with federal, state, and local health and safety standards; and (3) reasonableness of prices concessioners charge the public for services.

**Federal Lands: Status of Land Transactions Under Four Federal Acts.**

GAO/RCED-92-70BR. December 3, 1991.

ABSTRACT: This briefing report reviews the status of federal land transactions authorized under four acts—the El Malpais National Monument and National Conservation Area; the Nevada-Florida Land Exchange Authorization Act of 1988; the Apex Project, Nevada Land Transfer and Authorization Act of 1989; and the Targhee National Forest Land Exchange Act. GAO discusses (1) actions taken to complete the land transactions and (2) the use and development of the lands transferred out of federal ownership.

**National Park Service: Status of Development at the Steamtown National Historic Site.**

GAO/T-RCED-92-6. October 22, 1991.

ABSTRACT: The Steamtown National Historic Site, established in 1986, encompasses about 63 acres of land that formerly comprised a rail yard in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The site is intended to provide year-round facilities and programs to educate visitors about the role of steam railroads in the expansion of the United States. This testimony discusses the status of the site and notes that various uncertainties raise questions about (1) the reliability of the \$63 million estimated cost to complete site development, (2) identifying and disposing of hazardous and toxic wastes at the site, and (3) the feasibility of the planned rail excursion lines to surrounding locations.

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**National Park Service: Selected Visitor and Cost Data.**

GAO/RCED-91-247FS. September 30, 1991.

ABSTRACT: This fact sheet provides information on aspects of National Park Service operations. GAO (1) presents data on visitor accidents and fatalities and criminal offenses reported at the parks; (2) discusses the Park Service's hazardous waste program; and (3) provides a list of parks created since 1970 that have, or are projected to have, land acquisition and construction appropriations exceeding \$40 million.

**National Park Service: Cost Estimates for Two Proposed Park Facilities in Texas.** GAO/RCED-91-218BR. September 3, 1991.

ABSTRACT: This briefing report analyzes the cost estimates for the proposed visitor center at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park in San Antonio, Texas, and a headquarters/visitor center and separate maintenance facility at Big Thicket National Preserve, which is north of Beaumont, Texas. The Park Service's initial cost estimate for the San Antonio facility is \$8.63 million. To date, about \$200,000 has been spent on planning and design work. The Park Service's initial cost estimate for the Big Thicket facilities is \$8.41 million. So far, about \$564,000 has been spent on planning, and about \$3.1 million has been spent on the maintenance facility.

**Bureau of Reclamation: Federal Interests Not Adequately Protected in Land-Use Agreements.** GAO/RCED-91-174. July 11, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Bureau of Reclamation's land-use agreements with Scottsdale, Arizona, to determine whether the: (1) terms and conditions of the agreements are consistent with federal law; (2) activities approved under the agreements are consistent with applicable agency policies and guidance; and (3) potential exists for the Bureau to enter into similar agreements elsewhere. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) although the Bureau of Reclamation must approve development plans, it does not have adequate monitoring and oversight policies and procedures to ensure that lessees developed and operated facilities in accordance with the agreements; (2) in two separate agreements, transferring about 760 acres of land to Scottsdale for recreational development, local Bureau officials agreed to the long-term use of those lands with no compensation to the federal government, approved several for-profit activities, approved a reservation policy granting priority access to a select group of facility users, and allowed private operators to set public-use fees without verifying the data

used to set such fees; (3) Bureau instructions governing land-use agreements do not address the issue of public access or public-use fees; (4) Scottsdale did not compensate the Bureau for the use of its lands because local Bureau officials decided that no fee compensation was warranted under the agreements, since leasing the lands supported the Bureau's goal of providing its land for recreation; and (5) the Bureau had authority to enter into agreements to promote the development of land in the public interest for recreation, but typically negotiated such agreements at the regional or local level and did not maintain centralized information, making it difficult to determine whether similar agreements were pending.

**Bureau of Reclamation: Land-Use Agreements With the City of Scottsdale, Arizona.** GAO/T-RCED-91-74. July 11, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed two recreation land-use agreements between the Bureau of Reclamation and Scottsdale, Arizona, to determine whether the: (1) agreement terms and conditions are consistent with federal law; (2) approved activities are consistent with applicable agency policies and guidance; and (3) potential exists for the Bureau to enter into similar agreements elsewhere. GAO found that: (1) while the agreements themselves were not contrary to federal law, the absence of comprehensive oversight policies and guidance led local officials to base many key agreement decisions on personal judgment; (2) the law does not require nor preclude federal government compensation for the use of its lands; (3) Scottsdale did not compensate the government for the use of its lands because local Bureau officials determined that leasing the lands supported the Bureau's goal of providing its lands for recreation; (4) since Bureau guidance governing land-use agreements does not address the issue of public access, local Bureau officials approved a reservation policy at a golf complex that limits public use; (5) the Bureau has not developed guidance on establishing public-use fees for recreational activities on its lands; and (6) although similar agreements are being negotiated at the regional or local level, the Bureau does not maintain centralized information, making it difficult to determine whether similar agreements were pending.

**Federal Lands: Improvements Needed in Managing Concessioners.** GAO/RCED-91-163. June 11, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the: (1) laws and policies governing recreation concession operations on federal lands; (2) total number and types of concession agreements;

(3) total return to the government from concession operations; and (4) federal recreation resources management practices of the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Forest Service, and Army Corps of Engineers. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) no single law authorizing concession operations existed; (2) none of the agencies maintained a complete database identifying the number and types of concession agreements; (3) the agencies could not determine total compensation to the federal government for the use of federal recreational resources, due to incomplete financial data and unreported nonfee considerations; (4) the agencies identified 11 different laws governing concession agreements and operations, many of which were agency-specific and allowed for broad discretion in establishing policies; (5) complete financial data were available for only 60 percent of over 9,000 concession agreements reported by the agencies; (6) some agencies permitted field offices to accept such nonfee compensation as capital improvements from concessioners, but the offices generally did not report such agreements to headquarters; (7) from those concessioners who reported complete financial data in 1989, the federal government received about \$35 million in concession fees, with gross concession revenues of about \$1.4 million, representing an average return to the government of about 2 percent; and (8) various fee approaches by the six agencies resulted in concessioners paying different fees to operate similar activities.

**Forest Service: Difficult Choices Face the Future of the Recreation Program.** GAO/RCED-91-115. April 15, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on the Forest Service's: (1) management of its recreation program; and (2) corrective actions in response to previous GAO recommendations. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) Service funding and staffing levels were not sufficient to bring recreational sites and areas up to Service plans and standards, resulting in a backlog of unmet needs; (2) despite its use of cost-sharing programs and volunteers to assist with maintenance and reconstruction work, the Service was unable to complete the needed work with the available resources; (3) the Service lacked uniform and consistent data on the condition of its recreational sites and areas or on its maintenance and reconstruction needs, making it difficult for Congress to fully assess the future direction of the program; (4) the Service implemented actions to gather better data on the extent and severity of recreational sites and area conditions, enabling it to better manage the program and inform Congress of recreation program

conditions and resource needs; (5) funding could be increased through appropriations, although that could be difficult in an era of fiscal constraint and competing demands; (6) the Service would require legislative changes to impose higher fees; (7) increasing the use of volunteers and cost-share programs could increase funds, but not to the level of the resources needed; (8) in lieu of funding increases, the Service could still meet its current maintenance standards if it reduced the number of sites and areas to be developed and maintained, but that action could further strain existing sites and areas due to increased use; and (9) the Service could lower its development and maintenance standards to more closely match the resources available, but that could result in providing the public with a lower-quality recreational experience.

**Budget Issues: Funding Alternatives for Fire-Fighting Activities at USDA and Interior.** GAO/AFMD-91-45. April 4, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Departments of Agriculture's (USDA) and the Interior's budgetary treatment of fire-fighting activities during fiscal years (FY) 1988 through 1990, focusing on alternative: (1) methods of funding fire-fighting activities; and (2) budget approaches for funding both emergency and nonemergency fire-fighting activities. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the agencies' budgetary treatment of fire activities improved from between FY 1988 and FY 1990; (2) in 1990, Congress established a separate account to fund fire-fighting activities in both USDA and Interior; (3) in 1990, both agencies requested greater appropriations than in previous years, and received amounts from Congress that came closer to meeting actual fire-fighting needs; (4) USDA and Interior began to use consistent terms to categorize and track various fire costs to better determine whether certain costs applied to emergency or nonemergency activities; (5) despite such improvements, the agencies' continued use of transfer authority to fund emergency activities created difficulties, since the agencies could not anticipate such transfers in making budget estimates; (6) such transfers allowed the agencies to use funds originally intended for emergency fire activities to support nonemergency activities; and (7) alternative methods for funding emergency fire activities within the budget, included the provision of annual or periodic appropriations for emergency and nonemergency activities.

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**Recreation Concessioners Operating on Federal Lands.**

GAO/T-RCED-91-16. March 21, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the issue of concession-operated recreation services on federal lands, concerning the National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Forest Service, and the Army Corps of Engineers. GAO noted that: (1) since there was no single law authorizing concession operations for all six agencies, the agencies' policies regarding the types, terms, and fees of such agreements were significantly different and inconsistent; (2) the total number of concession agreements was not known or documented by any of the six agencies; (3) due to either incomplete data and non-fee compensations, the total amount of federal compensation for the use of its recreational resources was not known; (4) the six agencies received about \$32 million in fees from gross concession revenues of \$1.5 billion, and NPS and Forest Service concession operations accounted for about 90 percent of the revenue; (5) because the laws did not specify the calculation of fees to the government, the agencies developed their own varying approaches; and (6) those various calculation approaches resulted in concessioners paying different fees for similar activities. GAO believes that, to more effectively manage their concession programs, the six agencies need to develop and analyze complete data on their concession agreements, including data and the financial worth and non-fee compensations.

**Changes Needed in the Forest Service's Recreation Program.**

GAO/T-RCED-91-10. February 26, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the Forest Service's recreation program and the condition of its developed recreational sites. GAO noted that the Service: (1) could not maintain funding and staffing to develop and maintain its recreational sites and areas in accordance with its established standards; (2) had not yet developed a reliable system to gather uniform and consistent national data on the maintenance and reconstruction needs of its recreational sites and areas; and (3) deferred needed maintenance and reconstruction work, resulting in health and safety hazards that could result in the loss of recreational sites and areas. GAO believes that the Service: (1) needed at least \$644 million to eliminate the maintenance and reconstruction backlog; (2) needed additional millions to develop and maintain special recreation and wilderness areas at current standards; (3) will be in a better position with uniform and consistent national data to develop a strategy to guide its recreation program; and (4) needed to

consider funding levels, the number of sites for development and maintenance, and the revision of maintenance standards to develop its strategy.

**Forest Service Wilderness Management Funding.** GAO/T-RCED-91-11. February 26, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the Forest Service's funding for managing wilderness areas. GAO noted that: (1) the Service reprogrammed funds Congress designated for wilderness management to other programs without the appropriate congressional approval; (2) of the \$44.9 million Congress designated for wilderness management in fiscal years (FY) 1988 through 1990, the Service only spent \$28.3 million on wilderness activities; (3) from FY 1989 through 1990, Service wilderness management expenditures decreased by 4 percent despite a 20-percent increase in funds designated for such purposes; (4) the Service could not specifically identify the activities for which it used most of the reprogrammed funds; (5) as of January 31, 1991, the Service planned to expend only \$9.7 million of the \$22.6 million designated for wilderness management; (6) in FY 1988 through 1990, the Service spent \$17.8 million on such activities as measuring and controlling recreational use, constructing and maintaining signs and facilities, overseeing livestock grazing, and administering outfitter and permit programs; (7) in FY 1988 through 1990, the Service spent \$10.5 million for headquarters oversight, regional office planning, and forest supervision; and (8) Service district offices spent substantially less on wilderness management in 1990 than in 1989.

**Financial Management: National Park Service Implements New Accounting System.** GAO/AFMD-91-10. February 13, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the accounting capabilities of the National Park Service (NPS) and monitored its implementation of a new accounting system for its bureaus and major offices. FINDINGS: GAO found that NPS: (1) formerly used a system that did not comply with federal accounting standards, but implemented its new Federal Financial System (FFS) to improve its accounting operations; (2) expected its new accounting system to provide proper accounting for NPS appropriations and allocation of park entrance fees; (3) delayed establishing automatic interfaces with its other financial data systems and deferred plans to change its accounting codes; (4) also modified plans to provide many of the new system's users with direct access to the system's mainframe computer; and (5) required close monitoring to help ensure



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that its system's costs do not increase beyond its needs for effective operation, NPS uses sufficient staff to operate the system, and system documentation is adequate.

**Parks and Recreation: Resource Limitations Affect Condition of Forest Service Recreation Sites.** GAO/RCED-91-48. January 15, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO assessed the Forest Service's maintenance of developed recreation sites, focusing on the: (1) extent and causes of the maintenance and reconstruction backlogs; (2) Service's site inventory system; and (3) effects of resource limitations on site maintenance. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) aging facilities, increased public use, and public demand for new or modernized facilities contributed to the maintenance and reconstruction backlogs at developed recreation sites; (2) funding and staffing levels failed to adequately meet daily operation and maintenance needs; (3) the deferral of needed maintenance resulted in such health and safety hazards as contaminated drinking water, disintegrating boat ramps, and unstable stairs and bridges; (4) without routine maintenance, the environmental damage caused by natural forces and human use and vandalism could accelerate site deterioration; (5) the Forest Service lacked a reliable system to monitor or report site maintenance and reconstruction needs; (6) the extent to which districts documented site conditions and backlog data varied widely, with 12 of the 20 districts unable to provide current and accurate backlog data; (7) the Service planned to implement a new recreation information management system to collect backlog data in 1991, but the new system's usefulness was questionable because of the sources and types of data intended for the system; (8) between 1986 and 1989, the Service closed 4 percent of the 12,915 sites that existed in 1986, but total recreation site capacity increased between 1972 and 1987; (9) resource limitations contributed to reduced or eliminated services and reduced quality of the recreational experience; and (10) to compensate for limited funds and staff, the districts used such other means as volunteer and cost-share programs to help operate and maintain developed recreation sites.

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# Natural Resources Protection

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**Estimated Costs To Recover Protected Species.** GAO/RCED-96-34R.  
December 21, 1995.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on species protected under the Endangered Species Act, focusing on the: (1) costs and time needed to recover selected species; and (2) Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) species recovery plans. GAO noted that: (1) the 58 species recovery plans reviewed contained cost estimates that were not based on rigorous scientific analyses; (2) total costs estimates ranged from \$145,000 to \$153.8 million and initial-years costs estimates ranged from \$57,000 to \$49.1 million; (3) cost estimates for high-priority recovery actions varied widely; (4) while FWS and NMFS expect to achieve their species recovery goals after the year 2000, one recovery plan is expected to take more than 100 years; (5) other federal agencies, state and local governments, and certain private parties are expected to participate in many FWS and NMFS recovery actions; (6) FWS and NMFS officials believe that recovery cost estimates alert various governmental and private entities to the possible range of costs and tasks needed for species recovery; (7) recovery cost estimates include actions that may not be taken because of a lack of funding or are no longer needed; and (8) FWS and NMFS believe that high-priority species will require more expenditures and the estimated recovery costs contained in the 58 plans reviewed are not representative of the cost estimates contained in all approved recovery plans.

**Wildlife Protection: Fish and Wildlife Service's Inspection Program Needs Strengthening.** GAO/RCED-95-8. December 29, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Growing demand throughout the world for wildlife and wildlife parts, ranging from rhino horns to bear gall bladders, now threatens some wildlife populations. Although the full extent of illegal trade is unknown, the value of such trade into and out of the United States is estimated at up to \$250 million annually. Despite recent increases in the Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) wildlife inspection program, the program has had difficulty in accomplishing its mission of monitoring wildlife and intercepting wildlife trade. Given current budget constraints and downsizing within the federal government, increases in program funding are unlikely. GAO raises questions about the program's efficiency and effectiveness. The passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement is likely to increase wildlife trade among the countries that are party to the agreement—the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The expected rise in trade will increase the workload of FWS inspectors, who are already

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stretched thin along the U.S. borders. Wildlife inspectors, federal agency officials, and conservation and trade groups cited advantages and disadvantages to transferring FWS' wildlife inspection program to the Customs Service.

**Endangered Species Act: Information on Species Protection on Nonfederal Lands.** GAO/RCED-95-16. December 20, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Congress is considering reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act. GAO was asked to obtain information on the efforts of the Fish and Wildlife Service to protect species on nonfederal lands. A predominant number of the species protected under the Act have the major share of their habitat on nonfederal lands. Specifically, of the 781 listed species for which the Fish and Wildlife Service was responsible as of May 1993, 712 (or over 90 percent) have habitat on nonfederal lands and of these, 516 have over 60 percent of their total habitat on nonfederal lands. Two processes authorized under the Act have addressed potential conflicts between the effort to protect species and land use activities on nonfederal lands. The implementation of these processes has resulted in nonfederal landowners altering their planned or ongoing activities in various ways to minimize and/or mitigate their potential impact on endangered species. In addition, the Fish and Wildlife Service and others have initiated legal action to protect species.

**National Wildlife Refuge System: Contributions Being Made to Endangered Species Recovery.** GAO/RCED-95-7. November 14, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Of the nearly 900 species listed under the Endangered Species Act, one quarter can be found on national wildlife refuges. These listed species include plants, birds, and mammals. Although a significant portion of the current habitat for 94 listed species is on 66 wildlife refuges, many other listed species use refuge lands on a temporary basis for breeding or migratory rest stops. Refuges and refuge staff contribute to the protection and the recovery of listed species in several ways. First, the refuges themselves represent about 91 million acres of secure habitat, including more than 310,000 acres that have been acquired by the Service specifically for the protection of listed species. Second, refuge staff are taking steps to protect and recover listed species. Third, refuge staff, by identifying specific actions that can help a species recover, help to develop recovery plans that the Fish and Wildlife Service requires for listed species. Funding limitations constrain efforts to manage wildlife refuges. Two 1993 Interior Department reports found that available funding was

not enough to meet established objectives for refuges because the level of funding has not kept pace with the rising costs of managing existing refuges.

**California Fire Response.** GAO/RCED-94-289R. August 31, 1994.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on the late 1993 California fires, focusing on: (1) federal airtankers' response to the fires; (2) the adequacy of funding for the Soil Conservation Service's Emergency Watershed Protection Program to mitigate the damage from the fires; and (3) the use of California's FIRESCOPE Program as a national model for disaster response. GAO noted that: (1) firefighters used 39 federal airtankers to suppress the fires; (2) the California National Guard responded within the 24-hour readiness requirement; (3) the Economy Act provided sufficient flexibility for the use of federal funds to activate modular airborne firefighting systems, since commercial resources could not be provided in a timely manner; (4) the Emergency Watershed Protection Program appeared to provide sufficient funding for erosion prevention projects; (5) nonpriority projects are planned for completion by December 1994; (6) California has continually worked with other government entities to develop and implement well-defined emergency response procedures for recurring wildfires and has expanded the FIRESCOPE program to respond to other natural and manmade disasters; and (7) the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other state and local agencies already use FIRESCOPE as a model for disaster response.

**Endangered Species: Federal Actions to Protect Sacramento River Salmon.** GAO/RCED-94-243. August 15, 1994.

ABSTRACT: During the past 15 years, the population of winter-run chinook salmon returning to spawn in the Sacramento River has declined by 99 percent. The salmon was classified as an endangered species in January 1994. As a result of this listing, the National Marine Fisheries Services must advise federal agencies on how to modify actions that could harm the salmon and must enforce the Endangered Species Act's provisions prohibiting the "taking" of salmon. This report identifies major actions that the Service has taken to protect the salmon. These actions affected the Central Valley Project and nonfederal irrigation districts that divert water from the Sacramento River.

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**Research Fleet Modernization: NOAA Needs to Consider Alternatives to the Acquisition of New Vessels.** GAO/RCED-94-170. August 3, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the Commerce Department operates a fleet of 18 ships that supports its programs in fisheries and oceanographic research, and hydrographic charting and mapping. Because the fleet is old and technologically obsolete, NOAA has concluded that fleet replacement and modernization are critical to supporting its mission requirements. In this report on the cost-efficiency, accounting, and operating practices of NOAA vessels compared with other federal and private research vessels, GAO found that NOAA has generally agreed with previous studies that it experiment with contracting and chartering the services of private vessels as an alternative to acquiring new ships. NOAA's current fleet modernization plan, however, focuses on the acquisition of new vessels and does not fully consider the role that contracted and chartered vessels could play. Because NOAA does not have the data it needs to adequately assess whether use of private ships could meet its needs, the agency has no assurance that its fleet modernization plans are the most cost-effective means of meeting future program requirements.

**Endangered Species Act: Impact of Species Protection Efforts on the 1993 California Fire.** GAO/RCED-94-224. July 8, 1994.

ABSTRACT: In October 1993, a wildfire near Riverside, California, raged over about 25,000 acres—an area more than one-half the size of the District of Columbia. The wildfire destroyed 29 homes. Some homeowners later alleged that the loss of some homes was caused by the Interior Department's regulations protecting the Stephens' kangaroo rat, an endangered species. Specifically, the homeowners claimed that prohibitions against "disking" for weed abatement—an annual process of reducing the amount of vegetation around homes to protect homes from wildfires—prevented them from saving their property. This report reviews (1) the development and application of the diskings prohibition; (2) the nature of the fire and the resulting damage to homes; (3) the relationship, if any, between the diskings prohibition and the loss of homes; and (4) any developments on the diskings prohibition that have occurred since the fire.

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**Pacific Whiting Harvest: Controversy Surrounding 1993 Allocation Between Processing Sectors.** GAO/RCED-94-122. May 10, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The 1993 Pacific whiting harvest was controversial. The Department of Commerce rejected the Pacific Fishery Management Council's proposed allocation of the whiting harvest between the shoreside and at-sea processing sectors. The Council had proposed that up to 74 percent of the 1993 harvest be allocated to those fishing vessels delivering their catch to shoreside processors and that the rest be made available to vessels delivering their catch to at-sea processors. After much deliberation, Commerce—one day before the opening of the 1993 fishing season—approved an allocation of 30 percent to the shoreside sector and 70 percent to the at-sea sector. GAO concludes that the allocation decision for the 1993 Pacific whiting harvest was made in accordance with federal agency decision-making procedures and regulations. Commerce rejected the Council's recommendation because of inadequate support. The timing of the decision, which differed little from the timing of the 1992 decision, was the result of the considerable time that federal officials spent deliberating the Council's proposed shift in the 1993 allocation between the two processing centers.

**Ocean Research Vessels: NOAA Fleet Modernization Plan.** GAO/T-RCED-94-52. October 21, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) \$1.9 billion fleet modernization plan calls for acquiring 24 new or refurbished vessels during a 15-year period. Several reports, including those from GAO and the Department of Commerce, have encouraged NOAA to use more private sector ship services to cut costs. So far, however, NOAA has used contracting on a very limited basis, and its fleet modernization plan makes few provisions for vessel contracting. NOAA needs to experiment with contracting and leasing options to determine whether the private sector can effectively meet NOAA's mission requirements. In experimenting with contracting, NOAA will need to grant contractors flexibility in how they do the work so that NOAA obtains the cost and operational data it needs to determine the extent that contracting can meet mission needs.

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**Endangered Species: Public Comments Received on Proposed Listings.** GAO/RCED-93-220BR. September 30, 1993.

ABSTRACT: One issue likely to be debated during the reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act is whether a scientific peer review is needed of decisions to list species as endangered and threatened under the act. The act requires that these decisions be based on the best available scientific and commercial data, and peer review has been suggested as a way to ensure this. This briefing report provides information on the public comments that were provided in response to species' being proposed for listing, the extent and nature of questions raised about the biological basis for the proposed listings, and the frequency of public hearings on proposed listings. GAO also discusses the number of petitions to list, delist, or reclassify species that the Fish and Wildlife Service found not merited.

**Protected Species: Marine Mammals' Predation of Varieties of Fish.** GAO/RCED-93-204. September 10, 1993.

ABSTRACT: According to government officials, the hunting of steelhead salmon by California sea lions at Ballard Locks in Seattle, Washington, is the only documented case in which predation by one species is threatening the existence of another, although federal officials suspect that the adverse predation of fish by protected seals may also be occurring at the Columbia River and in the state of Maine. Efforts to counteract the predation at Ballard Lock, including relocating the sea lions and driving them away from the locks, have been unsuccessful. Other possible options include capturing and holding the sea lions during the steelhead's migration and making structural changes to the locks and the accompanying spillway. The National Marine Fisheries Service has considered but rejected the possibility of controlling the sea lion population through lethal means.

**Natural Resources Restoration: Use of Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Settlement Funds.** GAO/RCED-93-206BR. August 20, 1993.

ABSTRACT: Under the civil settlement stemming from the 1989 grounding of the supertanker Exxon Valdez—the largest oil spill in U.S. history—Exxon agreed to pay a total of \$900 million in 11 annual payments. Under the criminal settlement, Exxon was fined \$150 million and required to pay \$50 million each to the federal government and the state of Alaska to help restore areas damaged by the spill. This briefing report provides information on the amount and distribution of money that Exxon has paid through December 1992 under the settlements. GAO also

discusses issues surrounding the functioning of the Trustee Council, which was created to coordinate damage assessments and to seek funds from responsible parties to clean up natural resources. GAO concludes that Alaska and federal trustees managing the oil spill settlement funds will have to address several issues before there can be confidence that the money is being spent for natural resources restoration and other intended purposes.

**Endangered Species: Factors Associated With Delayed Listing Decisions.** GAO/RCED-93-152. August 5, 1993.

ABSTRACT: Delays by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in listing six species as either threatened or endangered were due to several factors, the most common of which were FWS concerns about the sufficiency of biological data and concerns about potential economic and other impacts. GAO found that the conservation agreements for the Bruneau Hot Springsnail and the Jemez Mountains salamander were inconsistent with FWS policy and guidance. Whether a conservation agreement is an appropriate means of protecting species that would otherwise warrant listing is a decision for FWS to make. On the basis of its findings, however, GAO concludes that a conservation agreement, if it is to be an effective alternative to listing, should (1) address known threats to a species that would otherwise warrant listing, (2) provide for monitoring to ensure that the agreement's mechanisms for protecting the species are properly and fully implemented, and (3) be implemented in a timely manner.

**Species Protection: National Marine Fisheries Service Enforcement Efforts.** GAO/RCED-93-127BR. June 21, 1993.

ABSTRACT: During 1991 congressional hearings, shrimp fishermen from the Gulf of Mexico complained that federal agencies were overly aggressive in enforcing regulations requiring turtle eluder devices, which create a hole in shrimp nets allowing trapped turtles to escape. This briefing report examines how enforcement practices under the Endangered Species Act compare with the enforcement of other fisheries and marine protection laws. GAO presents statistical data on the level of federal agencies' enforcement efforts and penalties assessed to enforce four major fisheries and marine species protection laws in the southeastern United States.



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**Wetlands Protection: The Scope of the Section 404 Program Remains Uncertain.** GAO/RCED-93-26. April 6, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The environmental benefits of swamps, marshes, and bogs—long considered fit only for draining and filling—are increasingly recognized today. Wetlands provide vital habitat for wildlife as well as improve water quality and control soil erosion. How to protect these areas has become a major regulatory issue in the 1990s. Under the Section 404 program, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is in charge of granting permits to anyone wanting to dredge and fill in navigable waters, including wetlands. GAO made several suggestions in a July 1988 report (GAO/RCED-88-110) on how the Corps could improve program management. This report discusses (1) the extent to which the Corps has acted on GAO's recommendations, (2) legislative and other developments that have occurred since the 1988 report that affect the program, and (3) the extent to which budgetary constraints have affected program administration.

**Endangered Species: Potential Economic Costs of Further Protection for Columbia River Salmon.** GAO/RCED-93-41. February 23, 1993.

ABSTRACT: Despite federal and regional outlays of more than \$1.3 billion to improve salmon runs in the Columbia River Basin, certain salmon stocks—especially those that spawn far upstream in the Snake River and its tributaries—have reached critically low levels. As a result, the Snake River sockeye salmon was designated an endangered species in 1991, while the Snake River fall chinook and spring/summer chinook were listed as threatened species the following year. In looking into the potential economic costs and effectiveness of efforts to protect these salmon stocks, GAO found that a preliminary estimate of lost jobs due to salmon protection will be unavailable until mid-1993 at the earliest. However, preliminary estimates of the value of goods and services foregone—a measure of net economic costs—suggest that the economic costs of salmon protection may range from \$2 million to as high as \$211 million annually. According to the more than 300 agencies and organizations GAO contacted, no studies address how effective any of the proposed protection measures may be in increasing the number of adult salmon returning to spawn. Past evaluation of measures to maintain and improve salmon runs either did not address the issue or were inconclusive.

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**Wildlife Management: Many Issues Unresolved in Yellowstone  
Bison-Cattle Brucellosis Conflict.** GAO/RCED-93-2. October 21, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Montana succeeded in eradicating brucellosis from its cattle herds in 1985, allowing Montana ranchers to ship their cattle to other states without first testing them for the disease. Cattlemen are concerned about the possibility that brucellosis, a contagious disease that can cause abortions and infertility in domestic cattle, may be spread from Yellowstone Park's free-roaming bison and elk herds to livestock grazing along the park borders, thereby jeopardizing Montana's ability to freely transport cattle across state lines. Although its policy is not to restrict the movement of the park's bison and elk, the National Park Service has, in an attempt to reduce the risk of brucellosis transmission, killed more than 10,000 bison that have wandered out of the park in recent years. This report provides information on the (1) scientific evidence that brucellosis can be transmitted from bison and elk to domestic cattle, (2) economic damage that might arise from such transmission, and (3) management alternatives for preventing or reducing the likelihood of such transmission.

**Natural Resources Protection: Reelfoot Lake Lease Terms Met, but  
Lake Continues to Deteriorate.** GAO/RCED-92-99. August 17, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Under an agreement signed in 1941, the Fish and Wildlife Service assumed responsibility for maintaining Reelfoot Lake, the largest natural lake in Tennessee, including controlling siltation and the growth of undesirable vegetation. Because the lake, which is used extensively by fishermen, boaters, and wildlife enthusiasts, captures drainage from adjacent eroding cropland, it has been silting up over the years and is increasingly swampy in areas; today, more than 40 percent of the lake is three feet deep or less. This report (1) discusses the extent to which the Fish and Wildlife Service has complied with terms of the lease agreement and (2) identifies the main causes of the lake's deterioration, options for improving the lake's condition, and barriers to implementing these options.

**Coastal Barriers: Development Occurring Despite Prohibition  
Against Federal Assistance.** GAO/RCED-92-115. July 17, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Coastal islands buffer the U.S. mainland from hurricanes and are an important source of habitat for fish and wildlife, including some endangered species. More and more islands, despite being highly unstable, are being developed because of their natural beauty and the dwindling

supply of beachfront property. This development has also been spurred by the availability of national flood insurance and other federal assistance. Congress, in an effort to cut down on environmental damage and the government's exposure to losses from storm damage, passed legislation a decade ago that prohibits new federal financial assistance on most coastal islands. Although this legislation has discouraged development on some coastal islands and other islands are unlikely to be developed any time soon because they are either inaccessible or unsuitable for building, significant development has occurred since 1982 in some attractive and accessible islands. Extensive new development can be expected in these and similar areas in the future. Most federal agencies have not provided new financial assistance for the coastal islands. Two exceptions involve the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which underwrote flood insurance obtained by ineligible property owners, and the Air Force, which granted an easement on land within Florida's Eglin Air Force Base at no cost to a quasi-state agency that wanted to build a bridge to one of the coastal islands. GAO also discovered that permits issued by agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have allowed development on certain coastal islands.

**Endangered Species: Contract Funding For Selected Species.**

GAO/RCED-92-218. July 17, 1992.

ABSTRACT: GAO looked at whether individuals or groups that petition the Fish and Wildlife Service to put plants and animals on the endangered species list later receive agency funds to study those same plants and animals. According to Fish and Wildlife Service officials, agency contracting policies do not prohibit petitioners from receiving Endangered Species Act funding to study the same species for which they have submitted petitions. Of the 228 contracts for studying endangered species that GAO examined, 38 had been awarded to study the same species covered by the petitions. But in only one case was a petitioner associated with a Fish and Wildlife Service award. In this instance, the principal investigator for the organization receiving funding was the same person who had petitioned for the species to be placed on the endangered species list.

**Endangered Species: Past Actions Taken to Assist Columbia River Salmon.**

GAO/RCED-92-173BR. July 13, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Concerns about declining populations of wild salmon prompted the National Marine Fisheries Service to list several kinds of

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Snake River salmon as either endangered or threatened species. This briefing report examines past efforts to reverse declines in salmon runs. GAO discusses the actions, and their costs, that federal agencies and organizations in the Pacific Northwest have taken to maintain and restore runs of salmon—both wild and hatchery-bred. GAO also discusses the results of studies and research on the effectiveness of the salmon recovery measures undertaken.

**Hydroelectric Dams: Proposed Legislation to Restore Elwha River Ecosystem and Fisheries.** GAO/T-RCED-92-80. July 9, 1992.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the Elwha River Ecosystem and Fisheries Restoration Act, focusing on: (1) the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) authority to license dams on the Elwha River; (2) the Department of the Interior's position on removal of the dams to restore fisheries; and (3) who should pay the costs if the dams are removed. GAO noted that: (1) the Glines Canyon Dam is within the boundaries of a national park, where FERC does not have the authority to license dams; (2) Interior, FERC, and the National Marine Fisheries Service believe that removing both dams offers the best prospects for restoring the Elwha River fisheries and their surrounding ecosystem; and (3) the cost of removing the dams should be allocated among parties in proportion to the benefits they have received from the dams or will receive from the restoration of the river.

**Hydroelectric Dams: Interior Favors Removing Elwha River Dams, but Who Should Pay Is Undecided.** GAO/RCED-92-168. June 5, 1992.

ABSTRACT: The Department of the Interior's position is that in order to restore fisheries in the Elwha River, two dams will have to be removed. As of May 1992, Interior has not worked out with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission whether the dams should be removed and who should pay for the cost of removing them. Proposed legislation before Congress would involve federal acquisition of the two dams and subsequent comprehensive analysis of the most effective and reliable alternative for fully restoring, enhancing, and protecting the ecosystem, fisheries, and wildlife of the Elwha River basin. GAO believes that a better understanding of the estimated costs and potential liabilities would provide for more informed public policy decisions on whether and how best to restore the ecosystem and fisheries of the Elwha River and who should be responsible for paying the costs of restoration. GAO summarized this report in testimony before Congress; see: Hydroelectric Dams:

Proposed Legislation to Restore Elwha River Ecosystem and Fisheries, by Keith O. Fultz, Director of Planning and Reporting in the Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division, before subcommittees of the House Committee on Merchant Marines and Fisheries. GAO/T-RCED-92-80, July 9, 1992 (10 pages).

**Endangered Species Act: Types and Number of Implementing Actions.** GAO/RCED-92-131BR. May 8, 1992.

ABSTRACT: This briefing report examines how two federal agencies—the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)—have implemented the Endangered Species Act of 1973, which sets forth processes for protecting plants and animals. Habitat designation has taken place for less than 20 percent of the species listed as endangered. Agency officials doubt whether designating critical habitats provides much additional benefit for a species, and critical habitat designation is considered a low priority. During fiscal years 1987 through 1991, when other federal agencies asked FWS or NMFS to consider the effect of proposed actions such as construction on a listed species, the two agencies allowed such projects to proceed as planned more than 90 percent of the time. While more than 650 domestic species are on the endangered species list, 600 others are recognized by the agencies as potentially imperiled. At the present pace of listing, it will take FWS until 2006 to list these species as endangered or threatened. Compounding this problem are the estimated 3,000 additional species that may be threatened or endangered in the future. The agencies attribute their slowness to resource constraints.

**Great Lakes Fishery Commission: Actions Needed to Support an Expanded Program.** GAO/NSIAD-92-108. March 9, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Sea lampreys, eel-like parasites that prey on fish, are native to the Atlantic Ocean but gained entry to the Great Lakes through the Erie Canal in the late 19th century. In response to concerns about decimated fish stocks, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission was created in 1955 to check the sea lamprey population. This report discusses (1) whether the Commission, a joint U.S.-Canadian venture, uses an ecosystem management approach that considers the potential harmful effects of sea lamprey control efforts; (2) what progress the Commission has made in adopting nonchemical methods to control the sea lamprey; and (3) if the Commission could effectively spend more funding on research for alternative control methods.

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**Wildlife Protection: Enforcement of Federal Laws Could Be Strengthened.** GAO/T-RCED-92-26. February 3, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Federal statutes and international treaties give the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service adequate authority to protect wildlife. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act does not, however, give the Service the authority to conduct a search and seizure without a warrant, as do other laws protecting wildlife. GAO continues to believe that it would enhance the Service's enforcement authority if the act were amended to provide such search and seizure authority. The Service investigates more than 10,000 suspected violations each year and maintains a conviction rate averaging more than 90 percent for cases prepared for prosecution. The agency cannot, however, investigate many more suspected violations or respond to state requests to participate in certain investigations because (1) it has a limited number of agents and (2) many of these agents are deskbound for months at a time due to insufficient operating funds. Further, the Service lacks readily available information on suspected violations and other enforcement activities that could help to justify needed resources. Although Interior is developing an information system capable of recording suspected crimes against wildlife, it also needs to (1) ensure that its agents report all known or suspected violations, whether they are investigated or not, and (2) document all state requests for assistance. This information should then be used to substantiate the resources the Service needs to carry out its law enforcement activities effectively.

**Natural Resources Damage Assessment: Information on Study of Seabirds Killed by Exxon Valdez Oil Spill.** GAO/RCED-92-22. November 27, 1991.

ABSTRACT: In the wake of the March 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska's Prince William Sound, a federally funded study sought to estimate the number of seabirds killed as a result of the accident. This was one of more than 50 damage assessment studies that sought to determine the impact of the spill on natural resources and develop a restoration strategy. The most controversial aspect of the seabird study involved killing 219 seabirds, immersing them in oil, placing them in Prince William Sound, and tracking their drift patterns to discover the number of birds recovered versus the number lost at sea. This report provides information on (1) the request and approval of the seabird damage study and (2) the study's methodology, which required killing more than 200 seabirds.

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**Wetlands Overview: Federal and State Policies, Legislation, and Programs.** GAO/RCED-92-79FS. November 22, 1991.

ABSTRACT: In recent years, the value of wetlands—such as providing fish and wildlife habitat and abating erosion—have become better known. Unfortunately, an estimated 50 percent of all wetlands in the lower 48 states have already been filled or drained, and another 290,000 acres are being lost annually to agriculture and development. This fact sheet provides an overview of federal and state wetlands-related policies, legislation, and programs.

**Wetlands Preservation: Easements Are Protecting Prairie Potholes but Some Improvements Are Possible.** GAO/RCED-92-27. November 7, 1991.

ABSTRACT: Wetlands protected under the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program are located mainly in the Prairie Pothole Region in the upper Middle West, including parts of Montana, the Dakotas, Iowa, and Minnesota. Prairie potholes are shallow, freshwater depressions and marshes that were created by glaciers thousands of years ago. Loss of such habitat is a major reason why populations of some duck species, such as mallards and pintails, have declined about 60 percent over the past 50 years. The Small Wetlands Acquisition Program has successfully helped preserve wetlands in the Prairie Pothole Region, primarily because the Fish and Wildlife Service has effectively enforced easements on wetlands. GAO believes that the program could be made even better if the Fish and Wildlife Service were to correct weaknesses in the (1) documentation of waterfowl's use of wetlands under easement and (2) guidance involving the timeliness with which damaged wetlands are restored and the circumstances under which violators should be issued notices and assessed fines.

**Wilderness Management: Accountability for Forest Service Funds Needs Improvement.** GAO/RCED-92-33. November 4, 1991.

ABSTRACT: To help ensure that Forest Service wilderness areas are protected and maintained in their natural state, Congress increased funding for wilderness management by almost 80 percent during fiscal years 1989 through 1991. The Forest Service, however, diverted more than one-third of the \$44.7 million designated for wilderness management to other activities. Of the \$28.3 million spent on wilderness management, \$10.5 million was used for management expenses—mainly salaries and

administrative costs—at organizational levels above the district offices, with the remainder spent on wilderness management at the district level. The Forest Service reported that 112 of the 500 district offices managing wilderness areas saw cuts in funding for fiscal year 1990, including some offices that had earlier reported funding and staffing shortfalls. Contrary to congressional directives, the Forest Service reprogrammed these funds without seeking prior approval by the House Committee on Appropriations. The head of the Forest Service recently outlined several steps to ensure that (1) designated funds are spent as Congress intended, (2) the Committee’s reprogramming procedures are followed, and (3) there is greater accountability over funds designated for wilderness management. In addition, GAO suggests that the Forest Service refine its accounting for expenditures and establish output targets to improve accountability over expenditures of wilderness management funds and the performance of wilderness managers.

**Oil Reserve: Impact of NPR-1 Operations on Wildlife and Water Is Uncertain.** GAO/RCED-91-129. August 1, 1991.

**BACKGROUND:** Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the basis for the disagreements between the Department of Energy (DOE) and its Argonne National Laboratory relating to Argonne’s development of a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 1 (NPR-1), focusing on: (1) the DOE Naval Petroleum Reserves-California (NPRC) and Argonne positions on NPR-1 impacts on endangered species and groundwater quality and how SEIS would discuss those uncertainties; and (2) NPR-1 compliance with environmental laws and regulations governing endangered species, wastewater disposal, and historic preservation activities.

**FINDINGS:** GAO found that: (1) between 1981 and 1989, the number of foxes living free within the NPR-1 study area decreased from 164 to between 44 and 58; (2) Argonne concluded in a SEIS draft that NPR-1 operations could have contributed to the decline of foxes in that area; (3) NPRC and Argonne staffs disagreed about how SEIS should describe the effects of NPR-1 operations on endangered foxes and nearby groundwater, primarily due to a lack of definitive data; (4) in September 1990, NPRC notified Argonne that DOE would prepare final SEIS, but it was unclear to what extent DOE would use Argonne’s data and views; (5) DOE and others were conducting research that could provide additional data on factors affecting the fox population and wastewater migration; (6) DOE has not ensured that NPR-1 operations comply with the Endangered Species Act and the National



Historic Preservation Act's regulations; (7) Argonne concluded in a June 1990 SEIS draft that NPR-1 operations violated California wastewater disposal requirements for sumping, but DOE believed that NPR-1 had not violated the requirements, and the state had not made a determination on that issue; (8) factors contributing to the noncompliance included NPRC officials' lack of knowledge regarding environmental requirements, noncoordination with federal and state agencies having environmental responsibilities, and mismanagement, which could result in legal action, fines, or a temporary shutdown; and (9) NPRC is taking action to address the problems, but unless DOE improves its management controls, similar problems may continue to exist.

**National Forests: Funding Fish and Wildlife Projects.** GAO/RCED-91-113. June 12, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on funds spent by various sources for fish and wildlife activities on national forest lands. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) between October 1987 and June 1990, fish and wildlife activities involving Forest Service staff participation totalled over \$202 million; (2) such activities included revegetation of streamside areas, fencing installation, and erosion control projects to maintain or improve fish and wildlife habitat or provide for the recovery of endangered species; (3) of the \$202 million, \$154.6 million came from congressional appropriations to the national forest system and the remaining \$47.8 million came from such outside sources as state and local governments; (4) from fiscal year (FY) 1988 through FY 1989, outside funding for fish and wildlife activities directly involving Service staff increased from about \$14.7 million to about \$16.7 million and totalled about \$16.4 million for the first 9 months of FY 1990; and (5) financial support from outside sources included \$32.1 million in cost-sharing arrangements between the Service and outside sources, \$15.7 million in work performed by the Service but paid for by outside sources, and \$14.7 million for activities in which the Service was not involved.

**Wildlife Protection: Enforcement of Federal Laws Could Be Strengthened.** GAO/RCED-91-44. April 26, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed whether: (1) federal statutes and international treaties provided sufficient authority to protect wildlife, particularly migratory waterfowl; and (2) the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) adequately

enforced those statutes and treaties. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) with the exception of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Endangered Species Act, the 11 federal statutes and 5 international treaties provided sufficient enforcement authority for FWS; (2) the lack of warrantless search and seizure authority in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act hampered agents' efforts to investigate suspected violations; (3) the issue of whether hybrid species were protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 presented enforcement problems, since the only alternative to conclusively prove an animal's species was to destroy and examine it; (4) although new and amended legislation substantially increased FWS responsibilities for protecting species, the number of FWS special agents decreased by 9 percent; (5) due to insufficient funds, some special agents were deskbound and unable to perform their basic responsibilities for months at a time; (6) staffing and funding shortfalls resulted in the selective enforcement of wildlife protection legislation; (7) FWS lacked adequate information regarding the extent of suspected crimes it was unable to investigate and the effectiveness of its law enforcement methods; and (8) joint FWS-state investigations of large-scale illegal commercial operations and massive illegal harvesting of waterfowl worked well, but reductions in FWS staffing and operating funds, coupled with its focus on large-scale operations, rendered FWS unable to respond to many state requests for assistance.

**Fisheries: Commerce Needs to Improve Fisheries Management in the North Pacific.** GAO/RCED-91-96. March 28, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed: (1) federal management of the groundfish fishery in the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska; (2) systems for calculating domestic processing capability; and (3) systems for releasing surplus allocations to joint-venture fishermen. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's recommended 2-million metric ton cap for groundfish in the Bering Sea was conservative, based on the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) 1984 estimate; (2) the Council maintained the conservative cap to Americanize the fishery, protect markets for groundfish, and sustain the ecological balance; (3) domestic processors provided NMFS with preseason estimates which were 43 percent higher than actual use, and NMFS believed that estimates were inflated primarily to limit or eliminate allocations to joint-venture and foreign fishermen; (4) the system for allocating groundfish often gave domestic processors larger initial allocations than they needed and reduced the allocations to joint-venture and foreign fishermen; and (5) joint-venture

and foreign fishing in the North Pacific fishery was eliminated when all allocations of groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea went to domestic processors in 1990 and 1991.

**Coast Guard: Millions in Federal Costs May Not Be Recovered From Exxon Valdez Oil Spill.** GAO/RCED-91-68. March 5, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on the Exxon Valdez oil spill, focusing on: (1) the total spill-related costs reported as of June 30, 1990; (2) the extent of the oil carrier company's reimbursement to the government for spill-related costs through September 30, 1990; and (3) improvements needed in the reimbursement process in the event of future spills. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the federal government, as of June 30, 1990, spent almost \$154 million on the spill, for which the carrier reimbursed it or was processing reimbursement of \$123 million; (2) through June 30, 1990, 10 federal agencies reported spending \$116.9 million for removal, \$22.6 million for damage assessment, and \$14.2 million for other spill-related costs; (3) 4 of those agencies accounted for 87 percent of total costs incurred, and the Department of Defense accounted for \$62.2 million, the largest portion; (4) as of September 30, 1990, the oil carrier company reimbursed the federal government for \$116.1 million of the \$153.7 million agencies reported they spent on the spill; (5) the Coast Guard's spill coordinator did not authorize for reimbursement a number of the agencies' activities, since it did not believe that they were related to oil removal; (6) several agencies lost opportunities to obtain reimbursement from the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund because of problems in tracking and billing their spill-related costs completely and accurately; (7) agencies estimated that future cleanup activities would require at least another \$26 million; and (8) the Department of Justice was considering civil litigation against the oil carrier company to recover damage assessment and restoration costs.

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# Public Lands Management, Mining Control and Reclamation

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**Animal Damage Control Program: Efforts to Protect Livestock from Predators.** GAO/RCED-96-3. October 30, 1995.

ABSTRACT: Efforts to protect livestock from predators, mainly coyotes, constitute the major activity of the Agriculture Department's Animal Damage Control Program. In 1994, more than 100,000 predators were killed by the program's field personnel. GAO found that Agriculture field personnel in California, Nevada, Texas, and Wyoming used lethal methods in essentially all instances to control livestock predators. Agriculture's written policies and procedures call for field personnel to give preference to the use of nonlethal methods when practical and effective. However, according to program officials, this aspect of written guidance does not apply to the control of livestock predators. These officials said that in controlling livestock predators, nonlethal methods, such as fencing and the use of herders and guard dogs, are more appropriately used by ranchers, have limited effectiveness, and are impractical for field personnel to use.

**Restoring the Everglades: Public Participation in Federal Efforts.** GAO/RCED-96-5. October 24, 1995.

ABSTRACT: In central and southern Florida, where national parks and wildlife refuges abut farmland, urban areas, and Indian reservations, the boundaries between public and private lands and between federal, state, local, and tribal jurisdictions overlay the ecological boundaries created by the flow of water. During the last half century, engineering projects have altered the quantity and timing of the water's flow, agricultural runoff has altered water quality, and urbanization has fragmented the region's ecosystem. As a result, South Florida—including the Everglades and Florida Bay—is showing signs of ecological distress. Federal agencies began an effort in 1993 to coordinate environmental restoration in South Florida. In addition, the Administration has identified South Florida as a site for testing a new approach to ensuring a healthy environment and managing the nation's lands and natural resources. This approach, which recognizes the interrelationships between natural systems and healthy, sustainable economies, cuts across the boundaries of ownership and jurisdiction. Central to this new approach is the need for federal and nonfederal stakeholders to collaborate and build consensus on solutions to problems of mutual concern. This report (1) identifies the processes used by federal agencies to involve nonfederal stakeholders in environmental restoration efforts in South Florida and (2) the lessons

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learned about federal and nonfederal collaboration and consensus-building in South Florida that may be applicable elsewhere.

**Ecosystem Management: Additional Actions Needed to Adequately Test a Promising Approach.** GAO/T-RCED-94-308. September 20, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The “ecosystem” approach to managing the nation’s lands and natural resources stresses that plant and animal communities are interdependent and interact with their physical environment to form ecosystems that span federal and nonfederal lands. GAO found that the four primary federal land management agencies—the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service—have started to implement ecosystem management. In addition, the administration’s fiscal year 1995 budget request includes \$700 million for ecosystem management initiatives. GAO recognizes that, compared with the existing federal approach to land management, ecosystem management may require greater flexibility in planning; in budgeting, authorizing, and appropriating funds; and in adapting management on the basis of new information. However, GAO believes that if ecosystem management implementation is to move forward, it must advance beyond unclear priorities and broad principles. Clear goals and practical steps for implementing ecosystem management need to be established and progress in implementing this approach needs to be regularly assessed and reported.

**Ecosystem Management: Additional Actions Needed to Adequately Test a Promising Approach.** GAO/RCED-94-111. August 16, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The “ecosystem” approach to managing the nation’s lands and natural resources stresses that plant and animal communities are interdependent and interact with their physical environment to form ecosystems that span federal and nonfederal lands. GAO found that the four primary federal land management agencies—the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service—have started to implement ecosystem management. In addition, the administration’s fiscal year 1995 budget request includes \$700 million for ecosystem management initiatives. GAO recognizes that, compared with the existing federal approach to land management, ecosystem management may require greater flexibility in planning; in budgeting, authorizing, and appropriating funds; and in adapting management on the basis of new information. However, GAO believes that if ecosystem management implementation is to move forward, it must

advance beyond unclear priorities and broad principles. Clear goals and practical steps for implementing ecosystem management need to be established and progress in implementing this approach needs to be regularly assessed and reported. GAO summarized this report in testimony before Congress; see: *Ecosystem Management: Additional Actions Needed to Adequately Test a Promising Approach*, by James Duffus III, Director of Natural Resources Management Issues, before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, House Committee on Natural Resources, the Subcommittee on Environment and Natural Resources, House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, and the Subcommittee on Specialty Crops and Natural Resources, House Committee on Agriculture. GAO/T-RCED-94-308, Sept. 20, 1994 (nine pages).

**Federal Land Management: Status and Uses of Wilderness Study Areas.** GAO/RCED-93-151. September 23, 1993.

ABSTRACT: In response to congressional concerns about the alleged degradation of areas being considered for possible inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, this report provides information on the types and effects of activities in these areas, which are managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. GAO discusses (1) the legislative guidance and the agency policies governing wilderness study area management, (2) various activities and uses occurring in the agencies' study areas, (3) ways these activities affect the areas, and (4) agency actions to monitor and restrict these uses and to repair resulting damage. Congress has allowed many different uses, such as primitive recreation and grazing, to occur in these areas. In the locations GAO visited, the effects and damage seemed to be concentrated in relatively small and accessible areas. Because people have various views on "wilderness," they will also have different opinions about the severity of "man's imprint" on potential and designated wilderness. The final decision about an area's suitability for wilderness ultimately rests with Congress.

**Ranching Operations on Public Lands.** GAO/RCED-93-212R. August 17, 1993.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to congressional requests, GAO reviewed the top 500 livestock grazing permits issued by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service, focusing on the: (1) extent that large ranching operations are dependent on federal lands; (2) dependency of local western economies on these ranching operations; and (3) contributions

these ranching operations make to wildlife and improving the condition of the federal lands. GAO noted that: (1) one-third of the cattle in 11 western states graze at least part of the year on federal lands; (2) the extent that ranching operations are dependent on federal lands varies by state and region; (3) federal lands are generally of lower quality and not as productive as private and state lands; and (4) the operating size of many livestock operations is affected by the amount of federal range land available during seasons of feed shortage on privately-owned lands.

**Large Grazing Permits.** GAO/RCED-93-190RS. July 16, 1993.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided permit holders' addresses and phone numbers missing from its listing of the top 500 Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service grazing permits. GAO noted that it could not provide the unlisted phone number of one permit holder and the other permit had been cancelled, sold, or transferred.

**Large Grazing Permits.** GAO/RCED-93-190R. June 25, 1993.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on the top 500 grazing permits issued by the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. GAO noted that: (1) it could not provide some of the permittees' addresses and phone numbers due to time constraints and unavailable information; (2) the information on the permits may not correspond to the actual livestock operators; (3) some operators hold more than one permit and some permits are issued to associations that represent many operators; and (4) some operators who do not hold one of the top permits may hold several smaller permits which raise their aggregate grazing level higher than that of an operator who holds one of the top 500 permits.

**Rangeland Management: Profile of the Forest Service's Grazing Allotments and Permittees.** GAO/RCED-93-141FS. April 28, 1993.

ABSTRACT: This fact sheet provides information on livestock grazing on public rangeland managed by the Forest Service, which allows ranchers to graze cattle on parcels of land called allotments. The Forest Service bills ranchers for the grazing, measuring usage by animal month, defined as one month's use and occupancy of the range by one adult cow, or five sheep or goats. GAO discusses (1) the number, the average acreage, and the average stocking rate of Forest Service allotments and (2) the total and the average number of animal months controlled by Forest Service permittees. GAO

grouped the allotment and permittee information into several categories, emphasizing the 500 largest and smallest allotments and permittees. In general, grazing allotments in the western United States were concentrated among the largest ranchers. The 500 largest allotments GAO studied encompassed more than 29 million acres, or about 32 percent of the total allotment acreage. In contrast, the 500 smallest allotments accounted for about 49,000 acres, or 0.05 percent of the total allotment acreage. Similarly, the 500 permittees with the highest livestock grazing levels accounted for nearly 4.5 million animal months, or nearly half of the total number of animal months. The 500 permittees with the lowest livestock grazing levels accounted for about 8,500 animal months, or 0.09 percent of the total number of animal months allowed.

**Rangeland Management: BLM's Range Improvement Project Data Base Is Incomplete and Inaccurate.** GAO/RCED-93-92. April 5, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) spent about \$18 million in fiscal years 1990 and 1991 to improve the public rangeland. These funds came from fees paid by ranchers to graze their livestock on BLM land. The law requires that the funds be used for projects such as fencing, weed control, and water development that benefit rangeland resources, including wildlife, watersheds, and livestock. This report discusses how range improvements are accounted for, including (1) the types of range improvement projects funded, (2) the cost of each project, and (3) the rangeland resources benefiting from these projects. GAO also provides information on the role that grazing advisory boards play in determining which range improvement projects are funded each year.

**Wilderness: Effects of Designation on Economy and Grazing in Utah.** GAO/RCED-93-11. December 29, 1992.

ABSTRACT: In recent years, several proposals have been introduced in Congress that would boost the acreage designated as wilderness in Utah. A 1990 study by the Western Economic Analysis Center, done at the request of the Utah Association of Counties, projects that Utah's economy would lose more than \$13 billion if one such proposal becomes law. In addition, some Utah ranchers and residents are concerned that designating an area as wilderness will reduce livestock grazing. GAO concludes that the center's study makes unreasonable assumptions and uses flawed methodology. The \$13 billion figure cited is a loss equal to about half of Utah's 1988 or 1989 gross state product and assumes that all mining, grazing, and recreation would cease when the lands are designated as wilderness. The



study's methodology is flawed because, among other things, it inflates the total effects of wilderness designation by not discounting future cash flows and by double-counting projected lost revenues. The limitations of this study led GAO to conclude that the effect on Utah's economy of designating more acreage as wilderness has not been adequately quantified. Likewise, the effect of wilderness designation on livestock grazing in Utah has not been quantified.

**Rangeland Management: Profile of the Bureau of Land Management's Grazing Allotments and Permits.** GAO/RCED-92-213FS. June 10, 1992.

ABSTRACT: This fact sheet provides information on livestock grazing on public rangeland managed by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM). GAO discusses (1) the number, the average acreage, and the average stocking rate of BLM allotments and (2) the total and the average number of animal unit months—the amount of forage needed to feed one 1,000-pound cow, a horse, or five sheep for a month—covered by grazing permits. GAO groups the information into several categories, emphasizing the 500 largest and 500 smallest allotments and permits.

**BLM Resource Allocation.** GAO/RCED-92-181R. May 20, 1992.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) fiscal year (FY) 1991 and FY 1992 budget and staff allocations for nine western states in management programs addressing oil and gas, coal, rangeland, cultural resources, wilderness, recreation resources, and resource planning. GAO noted that: (1) the BLM resource allocation process, including its budget development phase, takes place over 3 fiscal years; (2) BLM state offices adjust current budgets for such factors as inflation, administrative priorities, and initiatives, to develop new budgets; (3) numerous BLM, Department of the Interior, and Office of Management and Budget officials review and revise the proposed budgets over the 3-year development period, as well as the President and Congress; (4) total BLM FY 1992 budget allocations for the nine states ranged from \$29.8 million to \$53.2 million; and (5) total BLM FY 1992 staff allocations ranged from 510 full-time equivalents (FTE) to 975 FTE.

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**Rangeland Management: Results of Recent Work Addressing the Performance of Land Management Agencies.** GAO/T-RCED-92-60. May 12, 1992.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed its work on public rangeland management, focusing on: (1) its response to a consultant's critique of three GAO reports issued between 1988 and 1990 on rangeland management; and (2) other reports it has issued regarding rangeland monitoring and livestock grazing activity. GAO noted that: (1) the consultant made numerous criticisms about GAO reports regarding grazing allotments, riparian area restoration, and the federal wild horse program, but GAO believes that the critique includes little factual data to substantiate its assertions and misrepresents report findings to support its positions; (2) other federal and state agencies conducting similar studies reached conclusions that were similar to GAO conclusions; (3) both the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Forest Service have taken actions to address the issues raised in the GAO reports; and (4) its reports on BLM and Service rangeland monitoring continue to indicate that neither agency has sufficient staffing and funding to effectively administer or evaluate grazing activities.

**Rangeland Management: Assessment of Nevada Consulting Firm's Critique of Three GAO Reports.** GAO/RCED-92-178R. May 4, 1992.

ABSTRACT: GAO reviewed a January 1992 report by a Nevada consulting firm that critiqued three GAO reports on management of the western public rangeland by the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. Subjects addressed included declining and overstocked grazing allotments, riparian area restoration, and the federal wild horse program. GAO carefully examined both the consulting firm's analysis of GAO's reports as well as GAO's adherence to its own standards, policies, and procedures. GAO is confident that its work was done with due professional care consistent with generally accepted government auditing standards and that its findings are well supported, its conclusions flow logically from the facts, and its recommendations offer reasonable suggestions for addressing the problems identified. The first report provides GAO's point-by-point responses to the charges made in the consulting firm's report, while the second provides the titles of the documents GAO reviewed and the names of individuals GAO contacted in preparing its reports. GAO summarized these reports, along with two other recent reports on rangeland management (GAO/RCED-92-52, Feb. 24, 1992, and GAO/RCED-92-12, Nov. 26, 1991) in testimony before Congress; see: Rangeland Management: Results of Recent Work Addressing the Performance of Land Management

Agencies, by J. Dexter Peach, Assistant Comptroller General for Resources, Community, and Economic Development Programs, before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. GAO/T-RCED-92-60, May 12 (10 pages).

**Contacts and Documents Reviewed.** GAO/RCED-92-193R. May 4, 1992.

ABSTRACT: GAO reviewed a January 1992 report by a Nevada consulting firm that critiqued three GAO reports on management of the western public rangeland by the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. Subjects addressed included declining and overstocked grazing allotments, riparian area restoration, and the federal wild horse program. GAO carefully examined both the consulting firm's analysis of GAO's reports as well as GAO's adherence to its own standards, policies, and procedures. GAO is confident that its work was done with due professional care consistent with generally accepted government auditing standards and that its findings are well supported, its conclusions flow logically from the facts, and its recommendations offer reasonable suggestions for addressing the problems identified. The first report provides GAO's point-by-point responses to the charges made in the consulting firm's report, while the second provides the titles of the documents GAO reviewed and the names of individuals GAO contacted in preparing its reports. GAO summarized these reports, along with two other recent reports on rangeland management (GAO/RCED-92-52, Feb. 24, 1992, and GAO/RCED-92-12, Nov. 26, 1991) in testimony before Congress; see: Rangeland Management: Results of Recent Work Addressing the Performance of Land Management Agencies, by J. Dexter Peach, Assistant Comptroller General for Resources, Community, and Economic Development Programs, before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. GAO/T-RCED-92-60, May 12 (10 pages).

**Grazing Fees: BLM's Allocation of Revenues to Montana Appears Accurate.** GAO/RCED-92-95. March 11, 1992.

ABSTRACT: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) collected \$2.2 million in grazing fees in Montana in fiscal year 1991, part of which was distributed to state and local governments. GAO concludes that BLM's management of these receipts provides reasonable assurance that Montana is receiving its full share of the grazing fee receipts. GAO found that no lands had been misclassified, and the grazing fee receipts had been properly distributed. While basically sound, BLM's grazing fee billing and accounting systems are subject to errors, as any automated system is if

data are entered incorrectly and mistakes are not caught and corrected. Although GAO found several instances of inaccurate data entry, BLM had corrected them by the time of GAO's review. With the formation of a committee to identify and implement edit-checks needed to refine its system, BLM has started to ensure greater accuracy of the information in the system. GAO believes that these efforts are worthwhile and should be continued.

**Management of Artwork: Steps Taken to Preserve and Protect Bureau of Reclamation's Collection.** GAO/RCED-92-92. February 28, 1992.

ABSTRACT: In the late 1960s, the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation commissioned artwork depicting its water projects in the West. Because of inadequate record-keeping and controls, the Bureau has been unable to locate about 40 percent of the paintings, watercolors, and sketches in its collection. Some of the missing artwork may have been lost or stolen, and other pieces may have been returned to the original artists. The Bureau has done what it can to identify and locate the missing pieces, and since 1987 it has strengthened its accountability and controls over the remaining 201 pieces of art. Few of these pieces have been seriously damaged, and the Bureau has begun restoring the most valuable among them. The Bureau has not yet decided, however, how best to display its collection in offices and public facilities or loan out pieces for exhibit after their restoration.

**Rangeland Management: Interior's Monitoring Has Fallen Short of Agency Requirements.** GAO/RCED-92-51. February 24, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Domestic livestock graze almost 270 million acres of federal land in the western United States. The impact of such grazing, which dates to the 1800s, is a matter of increasing concern to Congress. While the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has done the required monitoring of range conditions, it has decided appropriate grazing levels for only about 20 percent of the 14,500 allotments covered by environmental impact statements issued more than 5 years ago. Further, it has not monitored about 7,200 allotments at all. For the allotments it has monitored, BLM has generally not analyzed the data or decided on appropriate grazing levels. BLM range managers cite staff shortages and higher priority work as important reasons why the monitoring has not been more extensive. GAO's findings are consistent with those in earlier reports on BLM's rangeland management program. These reports pointed out that BLM is hampered in

its ability to protect rangelands from grazing damage and to restore damaged lands because of insufficient funding and staff.

**Rangeland Management: BLM's Hot Desert Grazing Program Merits Reconsideration.** GAO/RCED-92-12. November 26, 1991.

ABSTRACT: The debate over the effects of domestic livestock grazing are particularly important in the nations' so-called hot deserts—the Mojave, the Sonoran, and the Chihuahuan—because of the fragile ecosystems there and the length of time it takes for damaged areas to recover. GAO concludes that current livestock grazing activity on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) allotments in hot desert areas risks long-term environmental damage while not generating enough revenues to provide for adequate management. According to recent data, the economic benefits derived from livestock grazing on BLM lands in the hot desert areas are minimal. The primary economic benefits accrue to about 1,000 livestock operators who hold livestock grazing permit in these areas. Yet many of these operators derive little income from ranching the public lands, who instead place a premium on the traditional lifestyle they are able to maintain via the permits. Conversely, other public land users value the use of desert lands for environmental preservation and recreation. GAO found that BLM lacks the staff needed to collect and evaluate data measuring the impact of livestock grazing on many desert allotments. Without these data, BLM is in no position to assess livestock usage of desert allotments and change usage as needed.

**Surface Mining: Management of the Abandoned Mine Land Fund.** GAO/RCED-91-192. July 25, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO examined: (1) the amount of Abandoned Mine Land (AML) funds the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) and the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) expended for administrative costs for fiscal years (FY) 1985 through 1990; and (2) whether OSMRE and SCS funded reclamation projects in accordance with the priorities set forth in the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA).

FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) for FY 1985 through 1990, OSMRE and SCS expended 28 percent of \$1.3 billion in AML funds on administrative activities; (2) since some states include such project-related costs as project design and monitoring in their administrative grants, and other states include small amounts of administrative expenses in their

construction grants, a precise figure on the amount of AML funds actually spent on administrative expenses is not readily discernible; (3) SCS estimated that it spent \$6.6 million to administer the Rural Abandoned Mine Land Program (RAMP) between FY 1985 and 1990 and RAMP projects funded in this time generally fell under the two highest priority categories of the six set forth in SMCRA; (4) OSMRE spent about \$137.3 million administering the overall AML program between FY 1985 and 1990; (5) states generally funded reclamation projects in accordance with SMCRA priorities and each participating state has its own OSMRE-approved ranking system to help guide project selection; and (6) OSMRE annual oversight reports found few major project selection problems during FY 1985 through 1990.

**Wildlife Management: Problems Being Experienced With Current Monitoring Approach.** GAO/RCED-91-123. July 22, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Forest Service's management indicator species approach to monitoring wildlife and their habitat in national forests, focusing on the cost-effectiveness and ultimate usefulness of this approach. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) although the management indicator approach is based on sound theory, several practical drawbacks exist which raise questions about whether data collected on selected species can provide the basis for drawing conclusions on overall habitat conditions; (2) the costs of monitoring indicator species populations were prohibitive, since the cost of monitoring increased as the population of the species being monitored decreased or as the size of the habitat increased; (3) even when planned data collection efforts were completed using the management indicator species approach to monitoring, the data had limited usefulness because they revealed population changes without conclusively relating observed changes to overall habitat conditions or Service management actions; (4) although Service headquarters officials acknowledge that problems exist in field implementation of the management indicator species approach, they believe that these difficulties stem more from the application of the management indicator species principle than from fundamental weaknesses with the concept itself; and (5) Service headquarters is revising its national direction on wildlife and wildlife habitat monitoring.

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**Rangeland Management: Comparison of Rangeland Condition Reports.** GAO/RCED-91-191. July 18, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO followed up on its 1988 report on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) and Forest Service's rangeland management programs, comparing the conclusions and analyzing the findings of two studies conducted by BLM and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) on the condition of the public rangeland under BLM jurisdiction. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) although NRDC and BLM reports reached different conclusions on the overall condition of the public rangeland, they were not necessarily inconsistent with each other; (2) the different conclusions were attributable more to data interpretation and presentation than to differences in the data; (3) BLM based its conclusion that current range conditions are better than they have been in the past century on studies that lacked supporting documentation and used different methodologies; (4) had BLM calculated its percentages solely on the basis of the land for which it had condition information, as NRDC did, its percentage of rangeland in fair or poor condition would have increased to 61 percent, much closer to the NRDC percentage; and (5) NRDC concluded that the data presented in its report did not show any significant improvement in rangeland condition over the data in its 1985 rangeland status report, and BLM noted that no substantial change should be expected to occur within only a 4-year period.

**Public Land Management: Observations on Management of Federal Wild Horse Program.** GAO/T-RCED-91-71. June 20, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) wild horse program. GAO noted that: (1) BLM removed thousands of wild horses from the range each year without the land condition data that would enable it to determine how many horses the land could support and how many needed to be removed to meet this capacity; (2) the number of wild horses BLM removed exceeded its adoption program's capacity; (3) BLM was making its removal decisions on the basis of an interest in reaching perceived historic population levels or the recommendations of advisor groups largely composed of livestock permittees; (4) the fee waiver adoption program led to the inhumane treatment and eventual slaughter of thousands of horses; and (5) since wild horse sanctuaries would probably not achieve the BLM objective of being self-sustaining in 3 years, the government would either have to commit to long-term financial support or have the horses returned to its custody. GAO also found that BLM: (1) was implementing a comprehensive management plan for Nevada,

and anticipated full statewide implementation in about 4 to 5 years; (2) published a rule in September 1990 making it difficult for one person to gain control over a large number of horses; and (3) took such actions to improve the prison halter training effort as establishing quality standards for the training being provided, implementing tighter controls over the age of horses receiving training, and limiting the amount of time horses could spend in training facilities.

**Rangeland Management: Current Formula Keeps Grazing Fees**

**Low.** GAO/RCED-91-185BR. June 11, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO: (1) assessed the soundness of the formula for computing grazing fees on most federal lands; and (2) compared the formula results to those of alternative formulas using updated cost and price data. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) although the current formula kept grazing fees low, it failed to recover reasonable program costs, since it did not produce a fee that covered the government's cost to manage the grazing program; (2) the current formula also failed to follow the rise in grazing land lease rates paid for private land and to provide a revenue base that could be used to better manage and improve federal land so that it would remain a productive public resource in the future; (3) alternative formulas produced higher fees than the current formula and tended to increase the fees faster over time; and (4) economists preferred a formula that would adjust a base value by a single index and make no additional adjustments for the rancher's ability to pay.

**Abandoned Mine Reclamation: Interior May Have Approved State Shifts to Noncoal Projects Prematurely.** GAO/RCED-91-162. June 7, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reported on the Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's (OSMRE) process for allowing states to spend federal surface coal mine reclamation funds to address noncoal reclamation problems, focusing on whether OSMRE ensured that states met the certification requirements.

FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the OSMRE certification review process did not ensure that states addressed all sites adversely affected by past coal mining practices prior to OSMRE approval of state requests to use federal funds for noncoal reclamation; (2) OSMRE funded reclamation projects in accordance with Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977



(SMCRA) priorities related to public health, safety, and general welfare, restoration of land and water resources and the environment, research and development, and public facilities and land; (3) to receive discretionary funds, states needed to show that they had reclamation needs as reflected in a national inventory of abandoned coal mine land problem areas; (4) coal-related reclamation projects competed with noncoal reclamation sites for funds that were limited to state share monies; (5) when approving a certification request, OSMRE did not independently verify whether a state had addressed all priority-3 through -6 coal projects, relying on the governor's certification statement that all coal problems had been addressed; (6) the lack of OSMRE policy and guidance to address SMCRA certification requirements contributed to the confusion over certification; and (7) OSMRE did not effectively communicate that states would lose further access to discretionary funds once the certification had been approved.

**Coal Mine Subsidence: Several States May Not Meet Federal Insurance Program Objectives.** GAO/RCED-91-140. May 28, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO examined: (1) the Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's (OSMRE) efforts to implement the federally assisted coal mine subsidence insurance program; and (2) six states' efforts to develop self-sustaining insurance programs.

FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) after 5 years experience with the program, two of the six states that received grants may not be progressing toward self-sustainability; (2) state officials noted that their participation rates were too low to generate sufficient premium income to meet the insurance reserve requirement for anticipated claims; (3) state officials also noted that low participation rates greatly increased the risk that a major subsidence event would threaten solvency; (4) OSMRE lacked effective management of federal grants and did not provide the oversight necessary to ensure that program objectives were met; and (5) OSMRE cited the limited funds involved and the resources needed to actively participate in state-administered programs as the reason for its passive grants management.

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**Rangeland Management: Forest Service Not Performing Needed Monitoring of Grazing Allotments.** GAO/RCED-91-148. May 16, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Forest Service efforts to implement recommendations to: (1) ensure that range managers identify all grazing allotments thought to be overstocked or in declining condition; and (2) concentrate monitoring and other range management activities on those lands. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) of the 9,217 grazing allotments in the Service's 6 western regions, range managers identified 2,183 allotments as in declining condition or overstocked; (2) the Service made little progress in conducting the follow-up monitoring necessary to identify improper grazing practices and devise corrective action; (3) the Service attributed its limited monitoring to staff constraints and limited resources; (4) although the Service gave priority attention to monitoring allotments classified as declining or overstocked, five regional offices monitored only 13 percent of such allotments; and (5) the number of Service range managers decreased from over 1,000 to under 700 between fiscal years 1979 and 1990.

**Public Land Management: Issues Related to the Reauthorization of the Bureau of Land Management.** GAO/T-RCED-91-20. March 12, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) management the public lands and issues related to BLM reauthorization. GAO noted that although BLM continues to make only limited progress in accomplishing its land management responsibilities, it has taken such specific actions as: (1) establishing management plans for all BLM riparian and wetland acreage and estimating the additional funds and staff needed for implementation; (2) establishing national agreements with 12 private wildlife and conservation organizations to foster projects to improve wildlife and fish habitats; and (3) issuing a hardrock mining policy that required all miners disturbing more than 5 acres to post financial guarantees to ensure reclamation. GAO believes that provisions of the proposed reauthorization legislation would improve BLM management of public lands, but staffing and funding constraints could significantly impede its progress.

**Public Land Management: Attention to Wildlife Is Limited.** GAO/RCED-91-64. March 7, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed federal wildlife management on public lands, focusing on: (1) whether the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) appropriately

considered wildlife interests during federal land use planning processes; and (2) the impact of federal management practices on wildlife conditions.

**FINDINGS:** GAO found that: (1) no legislation existed that specified an appropriate level of consideration of wildlife interests in federal land management; (2) wildlife protection and enhancement activities received between 3 percent and 7 percent of available BLM and Service staffing and funding; (3) while BLM and the Service uniformly considered wildlife needs during land use planning, when conflicts occurred, the agencies frequently favored consumptive interests over wildlife needs; (4) BLM and the Service did not always implement actions to benefit wildlife that were included in land use plans; (5) data were not available to judge the overall effect of BLM and Service policies and practices on wildlife conditions; (6) the agencies' land use priorities, budgets, and staffing met grazing, logging, and mining objectives first and provided for wildlife interests as circumstances permitted; and (7) BLM and the Service initiated efforts to provide more balanced consideration of wildlife needs in their management activities.

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# Oil and Gas, Minerals Resources

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**Sale of NPRS & Oil Shale Reserves.** GAO/RCED-96-28R. October 17, 1995.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed proposed legislation regarding the sale of six Naval Petroleum and Oil Shale Reserves, focusing on whether the proposed sales method will provide an equal opportunity to all prospective buyers and yield maximum funds to the federal government. GAO noted that the proposed sales method: (1) should provide an equal opportunity to all prospective buyers; (2) stipulates the acceptance of the highest responsible bid that meets the minimum acceptable price; and (3) should yield a fair market value to the federal government.

**Terminating Federal Helium Refining.** GAO/RCED-95-252R. August 28, 1995.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on the possible consequences of proposed legislation to end the Bureau of Mines' production and sale of refined helium. GAO noted that: (1) the Bureau estimates that production and sale of refined helium could cease within 6 months after legislation is passed and that other related actions could be completed within 2 years if no contingencies are encountered; (2) if the helium program is terminated, program costs would decrease to \$20.6 million in the first year and to \$3.5 million in the second year; (3) the Bureau estimates that all environmental requirements could be met within 2 years after passage of legislation; (4) the Bureau plans to use standard federal property disposal procedures to dispose of all property associated with helium refining, but private helium refiners have shown no interest in purchasing these assets; (5) about two-thirds of the helium program's employees would be subject to a reduction in force if the program is discontinued, while the remaining one-third would be retained or retired; (6) the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is the only federal user concerned about the availability and cost of refined helium to meet its unique and sporadic needs if the program is terminated; and (7) the Administration's proposal to terminate the helium program differs from the House's proposal and calls for allowing more time for termination, mainly to accommodate NASA needs, abolishing the Helium Fund and depositing sale proceeds into the U.S. Treasury, and capping remaining program spending at \$5 million annually.

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**Trans-Alaska Pipeline: Actions to Improve Safety Are Under Way.**

GAO/RCED-95-162. August 1, 1995.

ABSTRACT: The Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, run by the Alyeska People Service Company, transports nearly 20 percent of the nation's domestically produced oil and has operated for nearly 20 years without a major oil spill. However, throughout the pipeline's years of construction and operation, problems with the condition of the pipeline, the quality assurance program of its operator, and the effectiveness of government monitoring have been reported. These problems have resulted in continued congressional oversight. A study commissioned by the Interior Department in August 1993 identified 22 categories of substantial—and potential threatening—deficiencies in Alyeska's management and operation of the pipeline. Other audits have identified additional deficiencies. This report (1) assesses Alyeska's progress in correcting these deficiencies; (2) determines whether the corrective measures planned for three areas—electrical systems, quality, and preventive maintenance—will address the deficiencies; (3) discusses whether regulators are improving regulatory oversight of the pipeline; and (4) identifies the root causes of the deficiencies.

**Sale of NPR-1.** GAO/RCED-95-255R. August 1, 1995.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed draft legislation proposing the sale of Naval Petroleum Reserve Number 1 (NPR-1), focusing on: (1) the proposed sales method; and (2) improvements to ensure that the government receives the best value from the sale. GAO noted that: (1) the proposed sales method appears to provide equal opportunity to all prospective buyers and yield fair market value for NPR-1; (2) the sales method stipulates that the government will accept the highest responsible offer that meets or exceeds the minimum acceptable price, which will be based on the net present value of NPR-1, and requires that NPR-1 ownership shares be finalized before the sale; and (3) under the proposed legislation, the Secretary of Energy may use independent experts to value NPR-1 and finalize ownership shares and an investment banker to administer the sale. GAO also noted that the draft legislation needs to: (1) provide for adequate notification and information dissemination to improve potential buyers' participation; (2) resolve conflicting time requirements; and (3) provide for congressional notification of potential obstacles to the sale.

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**Naval Petroleum Reserve: Opportunities Exist to Enhance Its Value to the Taxpayer.** GAO/T-RCED-95-136. March 22, 1995.

ABSTRACT: This testimony focuses on ways to enhance the profitability of the Naval Petroleum and Oil Shale Reserves. Regardless of what alternative is finally adopted for the Naval Petroleum and Oil Shale Reserves, GAO believes that the goal should be to protect the interests of taxpayers by getting a reasonable return on these assets. If a decision is made to form a government corporation, care should be taken to establish a financially sound corporate entity with as few government restrictions on earning profits as is possible. If a decision is made to sell the reserves, the government must ensure that it receives fair market value for them. Steps can be taken now, such as giving the Energy Department more flexibility to set the rate of production so as to maximize profits and marketing Elk Hills oil more aggressively, that would be compatible with any more fundamental management changes.

**Naval Petroleum Reserves.** GAO/RCED-95-141R. March 17, 1995.

BACKGROUND: GAO provided information on the Naval Petroleum and Oil Shale Reserves. GAO noted that: (1) although the mission of the reserves has changed from emphasizing energy security to providing revenue to the Treasury, few measures have been taken to maximize profits; (2) profits could be increased at the Elk Hills, California oil field by allowing the Department of Energy to set the rate of production, finalizing equity shares, sharing the risks of drilling wells to encourage new drilling ventures, establishing a more reliable price index, marketing Elk Hills oil more aggressively, lifting the ban on exporting Alaskan oil, and eliminating certain requirements and preferences; (3) establishing the Elk Hills field as a government corporation could increase profits greatly; (4) selling the reserves could result in a great return to the Treasury if the government set a sufficiently high minimum price and established a competitive bidding process; and (5) it is unclear what benefits could be realized by operating a government corporation to manage Elk Hills in fiscal year (FY) 1996 and sell it in FY 1997, as the Administration has proposed.

**Naval Petroleum Reserve: Opportunities Exist to Enhance Its Profitability.** GAO/RCED-95-65. January 12, 1995.

ABSTRACT: The Naval Petroleum Reserve in Elk Hills, California, is jointly owned by the United States government and Chevron U.S.A., Inc. It is now operated by Bechtel Petroleum Operations, Inc., under a contract

that expires in July 1995. Chevron believes that it can run the reserve more profitably than the government can, and in May 1995 it proposed taking over reserve operations. Later, the Energy Department (DOE) suspended negotiations with Chevron on this proposal and recently began to solicit interest from other parties to operate the reserve. Like Chevron, DOE wants to lower the costs of operating the reserve. This report explores actions that DOE and Congress can now take to improve the reserve's profitability.

**Mineral Resources: BLM Needs to Improve Controls Over Oil and Gas Lease Acreage Limitation.** GAO/RCED-95-56. December 29, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) internal controls cannot guarantee that federal oil and gas leases are not issued to parties who have exceeded the Mineral Leasing Act's acreage limitation. BLM allows oil and gas lessees to self-certify that they have not exceeded the acreage limitation, and although the agency has procedures for auditing compliance with the requirement, BLM has not done a compliance audit since 1993 because it considers it a low priority. Even when audits were done, BLM's strategy for selecting lessees was ineffective because it did not target parties for approaching or appearing to exceed the acreage limitation. Finally, BLM has allowed companies that share the same officers, directors, or major stockholders to be considered separate leaseholders under the acreage limitation. GAO discovered one lessee who had exceeded the limitation by more than 190,000 acres in Wyoming and by nearly 27,000 acres in Nevada. Similarly, by presuming that companies are affiliated when they share the same officers, directors, or major stockholders, GAO identified five firms whose aggregate acreage exceeded the limit by more than 800,000 acres in Wyoming, 435,000 acres in New Mexico, and 86,000 acres in Nevada.

**Mineral Resources: Federal Coal-Leasing Program Needs Strengthening.** GAO/RCED-94-10. September 16, 1994.

ABSTRACT: In 1976, only 59 of the 533 existing federal coal leases were producing coal. In response, Congress passed legislation to discourage the speculative holding of federal coal leases and to encourage the development of leased coal. Yet GAO found that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has taken actions that do not further these goals. For example, BLM has issued 36 federal oil, gas, and coal leases to an unqualified lessee. This report assesses Interior's actions to (1) encourage the development of federal coal leases, (2) address the cumulative

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environmental impacts of additional coal leasing, and (3) consider projected demand in coal-leasing decisions.

**Naval Petroleum Reserve: Limited Opportunities Exist to Increase Revenues From Oil Sales in California.** GAO/RCED-94-126. May 24, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The government-owned and operated Naval Petroleum Reserve (NPR) in Elk Hills, California—the seventh largest oil field in the lower 48 states—generated oil sales revenues of \$327 million in 1992. The Energy Department (DOE) sells most of this oil to California refiners through competitive bids. The prices received by the government for this oil have been lower than prices for crude oil in other parts of the country. GAO concludes that it will be difficult for DOE to boost revenues from NPR oil sales by selling oil to Gulf Coast or midcontinent oil refineries because this oil is of lower quality than other available crudes and shipping costs are high. This report explores other ways that DOE may be able to increase revenues. For example, DOE bills its customers more often than private oil producers do, resulting in buyers making lower bids to compensate for the higher administrative costs. DOE also does not market its oil as aggressively as private producers do. In testimony before Congress, GAO summarized this report and also discussed (1) the relative priority that should be given to several options for improving the readiness and expansion of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and (2) the evolving mission of the International Energy Agency; see: Energy Policy: Energy Policy and Conservation Act Reauthorization, by Victor S. Rezendes, Director of Energy and Science Issues, before the Subcommittee on Energy and Power, House Committee on Energy and Commerce. GAO/T-RCED-94-214, May 25, 1994 (15 pages).

**Offshore Oil and Gas Resources: Interior Can Improve Its Management of Lease Abandonment.** GAO/RCED-94-82. May 11, 1994.

ABSTRACT: When oil and gas production from a federal lease on the Outer Continental Shelf ends, the Interior Department's Minerals Management Service (MMS) is responsible for ensuring that the parties to the lease bear the costs of abandoning the leased area. Lease abandonment includes plugging any abandoned wells, removing structuring, and clearing lease sites, all of which must be done in a way that minimizes harm to marine life and the environment. This report discusses (1) MMS' actions to lessen the environmental impact of lease abandonment and (2) the estimated costs of lease abandonment and MMS' approach for ensuring that the government is not burdened with these



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costs. GAO focuses on MMS' actions in the Gulf of Mexico because almost all Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas structures are located there.

**Mineral Resources: H.R. 3967—A Bill to Change How Federal Needs for Refined Helium Are Met.** GAO/T-RCED-94-183. April 19, 1994.

ABSTRACT: H.R. 3967 would change how the federal government's helium needs are met by shifting helium refinement from the Interior Department's Bureau of Mines to the private industry. In addition, the bill would repay the helium program debt. Whether the federal budget will be helped or harmed by this legislation will depend on whether private industry can sell refined helium to the government at a lower price. Revenues from the disposal of the existing helium inventory could also affect the federal budget. The choice between Interior and the private industry to meet federal helium needs is ultimately a public policy decision. GAO believes that H.R. 3967 provides a viable alternative for meeting current and foreseeable federal needs for helium with the potential for budgetary savings and repayment of the helium program debt.

**Mineral Resources: Hardrock Mining Reclamation.** GAO/T-RCED-93-67. August 5, 1993.

ABSTRACT: More than five years ago, GAO reported that it would cost nearly \$300 million to reclaim abandoned, suspended, or unauthorized hardrock mining operations on federal land in 11 western states; cleanup estimates since then have ranged as high as \$71.5 billion. No federal program or funding sources now exists to ensure that past hardrock reclamation problems on government and private land are remedied. Accordingly, any public policy decision on how best to address these reclamation needs will have to carefully consider the workability of such a program and the source of funding.

**Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: An Assessment of Interior's Estimate of an Economically Viable Oil Field.** GAO/RCED-93-130. July 9, 1993.

ABSTRACT: Although no one really knows how much oil may be in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Interior Department's oil reserve estimates relied on the best available geologic and geophysical information short of actual drilling data from the refuge. Overall, GAO agrees with Interior that the refuge's coastal plain may contain substantial

quantities of oil. This conclusion, however, does not take into account uncertainties in a field's development potential that could arise from variations in future oil prices or costs. Given the uncertainties of future economic variables, such as oil prices and discount rates, GAO believes that Interior should have developed ranges of minimum economic field size estimates for each prospect and then run its model using the derived field sizes. This would have yielded a greater range of values to account for the uncertainty associated with estimating what constitutes an economically viable oil field in the refuge.

**Mineral Resources: Meeting Federal Needs for Helium.**

GAO/T-RCED-93-44. May 20, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The federal government uses helium in the space program, weapons systems, and superconductivity research. The Helium Act of 1960 authorizes the Interior Department to conserve, buy, store, produce, and sell helium to meet federal needs. The act also requires federal agencies to buy most of their helium from the Bureau of Mines. GAO testified that the Bureau of Mines has acted to meet the act's objectives. In addition, the helium program debt, which overshadows meaningful debate on the merits of the program, could be canceled without adversely affecting the federal budget. Finally, a reassessment of the objectives of the helium act is in order.

**Trans-Alaska Pipeline: Projections of Long-Term Viability Are Uncertain.**

GAO/RCED-93-69. April 8, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The Department of Energy (DOE) asserts that Congress will have to authorize the leasing of the coastal plain of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—an area of high oil and gas potential—by 1997 to keep the Trans-Alaska Pipeline operating. DOE concludes that because of the projected rate of decline in oil production from Alaska's North Slope, the pipeline will likely be forced to shut down by the year 2009. The possible shutdown of the pipeline could be a consideration in reaching a policy decision on whether to open the refuge to oil and gas development or whether to designate the coastal plain as wilderness, thereby precluding future development. In assessing DOE's conclusion that 2009 is the most likely year that the pipeline will be forced to shut down, GAO evaluated the reasonableness of (1) the minimum operating level that DOE assumed for the pipeline and (2) the model and the key economic, geologic, engineering, and cost assumptions that DOE used to estimate oil production

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at the North Slope. GAO also looked at the reasonableness of DOE's belief that it will take 10 to 12 years to develop new oil fields in the refuge.

**Mineral Royalties: Royalties in the Western States and in Major Mineral-Producing Countries.** GAO/RCED-93-109. March 29, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The Mining Law of 1872 governs mining for most minerals on federal lands, the vast majority of which are found in the western states and Alaska. This legislation allows individuals to stake claims on federal lands and mine ore, including copper, gold, and silver, without compensating the government. In contrast, the government has been receiving royalties for coal and natural gas on federal lands since the 1920s. Congress has considered but has yet to amend the law to ensure that the public receives a fair return for minerals extracted. This report looks at how 12 western states—Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming—share in the proceeds from minerals mined on state lands and on federal and private lands within each state. GAO also discusses how Australia, Canada, and South Africa—three of the largest mineral-producing countries—share in the proceeds from minerals mined in those countries.

**Mineral Resources: Meeting Federal Needs for Helium.** GAO/RCED-93-1. October 30, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Federal agencies use helium in everything from space programs to superconductivity research. The Helium Act of 1960, which seeks to conserve and provide a steady supply of this inert gas for essential government activities, requires federal agencies to buy most of their helium from the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Mines. The act further provides that Interior price federal helium so that revenues from sales cover all program costs. This report discusses (1) actions that the Bureau has taken to meet the objectives of the 1960 act; (2) issues that should be considered when Congress decides how to meet current and foreseeable federal needs for helium, including whether the program debt in the Helium Fund should be cancelled or repaid; and (3) three alternatives for meeting federal needs for helium—continue the Bureau's existing program, require that all federal needs be met by the private sector, or allow federal agencies to choose to buy helium from either the Bureau or private industry.

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**Royalty Compliance: Improvements Made in Interior's Audit Strategy, But More Are Needed.** GAO/RCED-93-3. October 29, 1992.

ABSTRACT: During the past several years, the Department of the Interior has been collecting about \$4 billion in royalties each year from oil and gas companies that hold mineral leases on federal or Indian lands. Although the Minerals Management Service (MMS) has substantially improved its strategy for auditing royalty payers, these audits still do not provide reasonable assurances that such royalty payments comply with applicable laws, rules, and regulations. The amount of royalties actually audited or verified is very small, increasing the likelihood that noncompliance will go undetected. In addition, the judgmental samples are not representative of all payers and leases; consequently, MMS cannot determine with any degree of confidence such things as the level of compliance by payers or the magnitude of underpayment—that is, the royalties at risk. MMS can, however, require payers to do the additional work needed to correct the system problems found by audits and to compute any additional royalties due. An MMS task force issued a report in June 1991 recommending major changes to improve MMS' strategy for auditing royalty payers, including the use of statistical sampling, a measure GAO supports.

**Mineral Resources: Value of Hardrock Minerals Extracted From and Remaining on Federal Lands.** GAO/RCED-92-192. August 24, 1992.

ABSTRACT: GAO surveyed mineral operators on the value of eight hardrock minerals—barite, copper, gold, lead, limestone, molybdenum, silver, and zinc—extracted from public lands in 12 western states. According to the questionnaire responses, the total value of these eight minerals extracted during 1990 was at least \$1.2 billion. Almost \$1 billion of this came from one state—Nevada. The total value of the remaining mineral reserves on federal lands at the end of 1990 was estimated at almost \$65 billion.

**Mineral Resources: Proposed Revision to Coal Regulations.** GAO/RCED-92-189. August 4, 1992.

ABSTRACT: The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 requires lessees to diligently develop federal coal leases and maintain continued operation of leases once production begins. To meet these requirements, lessees must produce coal in commercial quantities within 10 years and continue production in commercial quantities. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published a proposed rule in the Federal Register in July 1991 that

would redefine commercial quantities, cutting the required level of coal production from one percent of recoverable reserves to 0.3 percent. This change would significantly reduce the minimum production level now required to retain a federal coal lease. This report examines BLM's justification for the proposed change.

**Location Dates for Mining Claims.** GAO/RCED-92-199R. June 16, 1992.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO commented on whether claims for lands discussed in its report on the mining law's patent provision, were located before the land escalated in value and the dates the claims were located. GAO noted that: (1) the claims for the 20 patent and 12 patent application sites were located from 1893 to 1986; (2) it identified the dates, but did not independently verify the dates; and (3) the value of the land at the time it was claimed was not an issue raised in its report.

**Trans-Alaska Pipeline: Ensuring the Pipeline's Security.**

GAO/RCED-92-58BR. November 27, 1991.

ABSTRACT: The Trans-Alaska Pipeline System is responsible for transporting nearly a quarter of the nation's domestically produced crude oil. This report reviews the security of the pipeline. It discusses (1) what federal and state agencies have done to assess the vulnerability of the pipeline to terrorists and (2) what these agencies and the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company have done to protect the pipeline.

**Mineral Resources: Federal Helium Purity Should Be Maintained.**

GAO/RCED-92-44. November 8, 1991.

ABSTRACT: GAO is examining various proposals on how to best meet the government's need for helium, which has applications in the space program, weapon systems, and medical and scientific projects. The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Mines manages the federal helium program. During its review, GAO became aware of a Bureau practice that may cause accelerated degradation of the purity of stored federal helium. Under the terms of its storage contracts with private companies, the Bureau may restrict the rate at which privately owned helium is extracted from Cliffside—a natural gas field near Amarillo, Texas. Yet the Bureau has not imposed such a restriction pending a review of a 1989 Bureau study on this issue. Meanwhile, helium is being extracted at a rate that may degrade the purity of the remaining helium faster than it would

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otherwise be degraded. Because larger volumes of the mixture of natural gas and helium must then be processed to extract and refine the less pure helium, the government could incur additional losses as high as \$23.3 million in 1991 dollars through 2050.

**Mineral Resources: Interior's Use of Oil and Gas Development Contracts.** GAO/RCED-91-1. September 17, 1991.

ABSTRACT: To prevent the concentration of control over federal oil and gas resources in a few companies or individuals, Congress has limited number of acres of oil and gas leases that one party may control in a single state. An exception to this limitation involves lease acreage within the boundaries of development contracts. These contracts permit oil and gas lease operators and pipeline companies to contract with enough lessees to economically justify large-scale drilling operations for the production and transportation of oil and gas, subject to approval by the Secretary of the Interior, who must find that such contracts are in the public interest. Since 1986 Interior has entered into or approved 10 contracts with 12 lease operators for exploration of largely unleased federal lands—ranging from about 180,000 to 3.5 million acres in four western states—and has designated them as developmental contracts. GAO believes that the 10 contracts do not satisfy the legal requirements for development contracts because they are for oil and gas exploration on largely unleased federal lands, rather than for developing existing leases. By designating the 10 contracts as development contracts, Interior has enabled 9 of the 12 contract parties to accumulate lease acreage that vastly exceeds the statutory acreage limitation. All nine of the contract parties were major or large independent oil companies. As a result, other parties who wish to participate in developing federal oil and gas resources within the four states may be adversely affected because the parties to Interior's contracts have been able to compete for and obtain lease acreage beyond the statutory acreage limitation. Although Interior believes that the Secretary has the discretion under law to use development contracts in the current manner, in April 1989 it ceased issuing these contracts pending completion of GAO's review. Congress needs to resolve the matter by amending mineral leasing laws to expressly permit or prohibit Interior to enter into or approve development contracts for oil and gas on largely unleased federal lands or to increase or remove the acreage limitation.

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**Trans-Alaska Pipeline: Regulators Have Not Ensured That Government Requirements Are Being Met.** GAO/RCED-91-89. July 19, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO examined the adequacy of regulatory oversight of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS), focusing on TAPS: (1) operational safety; (2) oil spill response capabilities; and (3) ability to protect the environment.

FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) several federal and state agencies had TAPS monitoring, oversight, and enforcement responsibilities; (2) regulators essentially accepted the pipeline operation contractor's reports regarding TAPS conditions and did not independently evaluate corrosion prevention and detection systems; (3) although aware of deficiencies in the corrosion prevention and detection systems, regulators did not direct the contractor to take action until after the contractor detected significant pipeline corrosion in 1989; (4) regulators conducted little oversight of terminal operations; (5) regulatory review of the oil-spill response plan was cursory until after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, after which federal and state regulators reevaluated oil-spill risks and response capabilities; (6) regulators do not plan to require the contractor to conduct a drill to fully test its response capabilities; (7) there was no long-term monitoring program to assess TAPS overall environmental impact, making it difficult to assess oil-spill impacts or to identify the most appropriate containment, cleanup, and disposal technologies; (8) regulators did not have adequate systems to carry out their oversight responsibilities, did not dedicate sufficient staff for monitoring pipeline activities, and did not coordinate oversight activities to ensure comprehensive monitoring of all pipeline activities; and (9) several regulators assigned staff to a joint oversight office composed of federal and state agencies with statutory authority over TAPS.

**Mineral Resources: Increased Attention Being Given to Cyanide Operations.** GAO/RCED-91-145. June 20, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the environmental consequences of mining operations using cyanide to extract gold and other minerals from federal lands, focusing on the: (1) hazards of cyanide operations to wildlife and the environment; and (2) efficacy, implementation, and enforcement of existing laws and regulations governing cyanide extraction operations. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) as of January 1990, there were 119 active cyanide

operations on federal land in Nevada, California, and Arizona, with 113 on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 6 on lands managed by the Forest Service; (2) cyanide operators reported over 9,000 cyanide-related wildlife deaths, mostly involving migratory waterfowl, between 1984 and 1990; (3) cyanide operators typically used hazing techniques to scare wildlife away from operations, but they were not as effective over the long term as covering or fencing cyanide ponds; (4) examination of 31 inadvertent cyanide discharges from operations indicated minimal environmental damage; (5) BLM, the Forest Service, state agencies, and other federal agencies had adequate authority to regulate cyanide operations and enforce laws to protect wildlife and the environment from their potential hazards, but there was little coordination among the agencies, and the agencies had varying reporting requirements regarding cyanide operations, discharges, and wildlife deaths; (6) in August 1990, BLM issued a cyanide management policy, and Nevada recently enacted legislation requiring operators to obtain permits for cyanide ponds and report wildlife deaths, but Arizona, California, and the Forest Service lacked overall cyanide management policy; and (7) BLM required quarterly inspection of cyanide operations, but the states and the Forest Service did not have minimum inspection requirements.

**Mineral Revenues: Interior Used Reasonable Approach to Assess Effect of 1988 Regulations.** GAO/RCED-91-153. May 30, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO examined the effect the Department of the Interior's March 1988 oil and gas product valuation regulations had on royalties from Indian and federal onshore and offshore leases, focusing on the: (1) anticipated and actual effects of the revised regulations; and (2) reasonableness of the methodology used by Interior's Mineral Management Service (MMS) to assess the regulations' effects. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the regulations standardized the procedures for computing onshore and offshore gas processing allowances and established a uniform procedure for computing transportation allowances; (2) MMS believed that a change in the way processed gas was valued could decrease royalties from onshore leases, while changes in the way allowances were determined could either increase or decrease royalties, depending on the type of allowance; (3) after consideration of volume and price adjustments, onshore, Indian, and offshore lease royalties varied both before and after the revised regulations became effective; and (4) MMS methodology to assess the effect of the revised regulations on royalties was reasonable, but states and



tribes expressed concern that the reports did not analyze data by individual state and tribe.

**Tax Incentives and Enhanced Oil Recovery Techniques.**

GAO/T-GGD-91-36. May 21, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the use of tax incentives for increasing domestic oil production and exploration, focusing on enhanced oil recovery (EOR) techniques. GAO noted that: (1) Congress only sporadically reviewed tax expenditures, rarely compared their effectiveness to alternative mechanisms for achieving similar goals, and did not subject them to overall limits to control their total budgetary impact; (2) tax incentives for domestic oil production, in the form of building up the strategic petroleum reserve or such trade restrictions as tariffs or quotas, would increase production; (3) government subsidies for the use of EOR techniques would encourage firms to undertake risky petroleum exploration activities that could result in financial loss; (4) the tax expenditure approach favored projects that were close to being viable without the tax break and generated fewer inefficient projects than direct subsidies; (5) tax expenditures aimed at certain activities, such as EOR methods, offered the potential for giving a better return on the tax dollar; (6) it would be more cost-effective to target tax incentives at activities that did not already receive substantial tax breaks than at types of investments that already were eligible for favorable treatment; and (7) environmental effects must be considered in evaluating costs and benefits of the increased use of EOR.

**Mineral Revenues: Potential Cost to Repurchase Offshore Oil and Gas Leases.**

GAO/RCED-91-93. February 22, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the range of potential costs to the federal government for the cancellation of 123 oil and gas leases offshore Alaska, Florida, and North Carolina. FINDINGS: GAO found that the: (1) bonuses, rents, and associated interest ranged from \$889.4 million to \$970.7 million for the 123 leases, as of December 31, 1990; (2) federal government was only obligated to pay the lessee the fair value of the lease or sunk costs plus interest which accrues from lease suspension to lease cancellation; (3) lessees spent \$1.5 million for the Alaska leases, up to \$21 million for the Florida leases, and \$20 million for the North Carolina leases; and (4) federal government, as of December 31, 1990, would be required to reimburse the lessees for about \$1 billion under the sunk cost approach if it cancelled the 123 leases.

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# Water Resources

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## **Animas-La Plata Project: Status and Legislative Framework.**

GAO/RCED-96-1. November 17, 1995.

ABSTRACT: The Interior Department's Animas-La Plata Project was designed to store water and divert it to arid regions in southwestern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico, mainly by channelling water from the Animas River to the La Plata River basin. Before beginning construction of the project, the Interior Department is required to determine whether the project would jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species. This report provides information on the history and status of the Animas-La Plata project, the legislative framework provided for the project by the 1988 Colorado Ute Indian Water Rights Settlement Act and the Endangered Species Act, the consultation between the Bureau of Reclamation and the Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act, and the project's relationship to another congressionally authorized project—the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project.

## **Midwest Flood: Information on the Performance, Effects, and Control of Levees.**

GAO/RCED-95-125. August 7, 1995.

ABSTRACT: The intense rainfall that deluged the upper Mississippi River basin in the spring and summer of 1993 caused the largest flood ever measured at St. Lewis. This unprecedented event in nine midwestern states saw the highest flood crests ever recorded at 95 measuring stations on the region's rivers. The catastrophic flooding caused 95 deaths and extensive property damage and forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people. The President declared 505 counties to be federal disaster areas, and estimates of the damage have ranged as high as \$16 billion. This report examines the operation of the levees, which are earthen or masonry structures, including floodwalls, that are typically built along rivers to keep floodwaters from overflowing adjacent floodplains. GAO reviews the extent to which (1) the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' flood control levees prevented flooding and reduced damage during the event; (2) the federal levees increased the height of the flooding and contributed to the damage; and (3) federal, state, and local governments exercise control over the design, construction, placement, and maintenance of nonfederal levees.

## **Central Arizona Project: Costs and Benefits of Acquiring the Harquahala Water Entitlement.**

GAO/RCED-95-102. June 5, 1995.

ABSTRACT: The Fort McDowell Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act of 1990 requires the Interior Department to acquire nearly

14,000 acre-feet of water to complete the settlement of the Fort McDowell Indian Community's water rights claim against Arizona parties and the federal government. The Interior Department acquired the water from the Harquahala Valley Irrigation District, one of 10 irrigation districts that contracted for non-Indian agricultural water from Interior's Central Arizona Project. This report provides information on how Harquahala became a source of water for the settlement, the federal government's costs to acquire the water, and the benefits accrued to the parties involved in the acquisition. The report also discusses the status of Agriculture Department loans made to Harquahala landowners.

**Water Quality: Information on Salinity Control Projects in the Colorado River Basin.** GAO/T-RCED-95-185. May 11, 1995.

ABSTRACT: Through fiscal year 1994, the Interior and Agriculture Departments (USDA) spent \$362 million on salinity control projects in six states. Interior's Bureau of Reclamation and USDA estimate that they will spend about \$428 million more for additional projects, while Interior's Bureau of Land Management expects to spend \$800,000 in fiscal year 1995. In selecting salinity control methods, the agencies consider several factors, key among them the methods' effectiveness and cost. According to Interior's measurements of the salinity control program's effectiveness, salinity levels in the Colorado River since 1974 have been below limits set by the Clean Water Act. With completion of the projects under construction or planned, salinity levels should stay within the established limits beyond 2010. GAO summarized this report in testimony before Congress; see: Water Quality: Information on Salinity Control Projects in the Colorado River Basin, by James Duffus III, Director of Natural Resources Management Issues, before the Subcommittee on Water and Power Resources, House Committee on Resources. GAO/T-RCED-95-185, May 11, 1995 (8 pages).

**Water Quality: Information on Salinity Control Projects in the Colorado River Basin.** GAO/RCED-95-58. March 29, 1995.

ABSTRACT: Through fiscal year 1994, the Interior and Agriculture Departments (USDA) spent \$362 million on salinity control projects in six states. Interior's Bureau of Reclamation and USDA estimate that they will spend about \$428 million more for additional projects, while Interior's Bureau of Land Management expects to spend \$800,000 in fiscal year 1995. In selecting salinity control methods, the agencies consider several factors, key among them the methods' effectiveness and cost. According to

Interior's measurements of the salinity control program's effectiveness, salinity levels in the Colorado River since 1974 have been below limits set by the Clean Water Act. With completion of the projects under construction or planned, salinity levels should stay within the established limits beyond 2010. GAO summarized this report in testimony before Congress; see: *Water Quality: Information on Salinity Control Projects in the Colorado River Basin*, by James Duffus III, Director of Natural Resources Management Issues, before the Subcommittee on Water and Power Resources, House Committee on Resources. GAO/T-RCED-95-185, May 11, 1995 (8 pages).

**Water Resources: Flooding on Easement Lands Within the Red Rock, Iowa, Reservoir.** GAO/RCED-95-4. December 23, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Before the Red Rock Dam and Lake Project near Des Moines, Iowa, began operating in 1969, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers purchased easements from landowners on 29,000 acres within the reservoir's boundary. The easements give the Corps the right to occasionally flood the easement lands when the dam is forced to hold back water upstream in the reservoir to prevent flooding downstream. Because of heavier-than-expected rainfall during the 1970s and 1980s, the easement lands were flooded more often than the Corps had estimated. In 1985, Congress authorized a buyout program for easement landowners who were willing to sell their land to the Corps; however, few owners have been interested in selling, and their complaints about flooding have persisted. This report (1) determines whether the property within the Red Rock reservoir's boundary has been inundated beyond the levels permitted by the easements; (2) recommends whether compensation for the easements should be renegotiated with landowners; and (3) reports on actions that the Corps has taken to implement the buyout program.

**Water Markets: Increasing Federal Revenues Through Water Transfers.** GAO/RCED-94-164. September 21, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Most water in the arid western United States delivered through federal projects is used for agriculture, but the demand for water for urban, recreational, and environmental uses is growing. The federal government plays a role in water management in the arid West mainly through water resource projects. Water transfer, in which rights to use water are bought and sold, is seen by many resource economists as a way to reallocate scarce water to new users by allowing those who place the highest economic value on it to purchase it. Those who want more

water—such as municipalities—often are willing to pay considerably higher prices for it than the current users, and irrigators who receive subsidized water from federal projects may want to transfer this water to a municipality at a profit. At the same time, these transactions may allow the Bureau of Reclamation to share in the profits. This report examines (1) whether water transfers will boost revenues, (2) how the Bureau could increase its revenues from transferred water, and (3) what issues the Bureau should consider in setting prices for transferred water.

**Water and Waste Disposal.** GAO/RCED-94-229R. June 6, 1994.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Water and Waste Disposal Grant Program, focusing on: (1) how different areas of the country benefit from the program; (2) the program's matching funding requirements; and (3) how the program has been implemented for Mexican border states and rural Alaskan villages. GAO noted that: (1) most states benefit from the program, but some states use the program more actively than others; (2) Rural Development Administration (RDA) grants generally may not exceed 75 percent of a project's costs, and rural communities must fund the remaining costs; (3) RDA may fund up to 100 percent of project costs in communities whose residents face significant health risks; (4) RDA has obligated about \$25 million of the \$50 million in grant funds that Congress specifically targeted for the border states for fiscal years (FY) 1993 and 1994; and (5) RDA anticipates that it will soon begin obligating portions of the FY 1994 grant funds targeted for rural Alaskan villages.

**Water Transfers: More Efficient Water Use Possible, If Problems Are Addressed.** GAO/RCED-94-35. May 23, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Debates over how water from western federal water projects should be used have become more heated in recent years. Farmers use more than 80 percent of the western water withdrawn for use. Environmental problems, such as selenium contamination and salinity, have been linked to agricultural irrigation. Moreover, as urban populations, tourism, and environmental awareness continue to grow, the demand for water increases for cities, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitats. Building dams to meet new demand is often not an option because of their high price tags and harmful environmental effects. Advocated by resource economists and others, water markets, in which rights to use water are bought and sold, would allocate water to its highest economic use by allowing those who place the highest economic value on

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it to buy it. This report examines (1) the costs and benefits of water transfers; (2) how water markets might be structured to address the impacts on parties outside of transfers; (3) the legal, institutional, and other issues that would need to be addressed to implement a federal water market; and (4) how transfers of water from federal projects could be coordinated with state law.

**Water Subsidies: Impact of Higher Irrigation Rates on Central Valley Project Farmers.** GAO/RCED-94-8. April 19, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Farmers have received federally subsidized water from the Interior Department's Central Valley Project for up to 40 years under fixed-rate water service contracts. The fixed rates, however, no longer function as intended; they do not cover Interior's operating costs and have not been enough to repay virtually any of the \$1 billion in construction costs owed. Moreover, environmental and water use problems have been linked to the irrigation carried out under these contracts. Studies by agricultural economists suggest that higher water prices would increase irrigation efficiency and conservation, thereby reducing environmental degradation caused by irrigation and freeing up water now used for irrigation for other uses. This report (1) estimates the impact on farm profits of the higher irrigation rates mandated under 1992 legislation and of further rate increases under various scenarios, (2) estimates the financial benefits to the federal government of increasing the irrigation rates, and (3) determines how farmers can mitigate the impact of higher rates.

**Central Utah Project Cost Allocations.** GAO/RCED-94-65R. January 25, 1994.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a legislative requirement, GAO reviewed the development of cost accounting standards for the Department of the Interior to follow in allocating costs for the Central Utah Project (CUP). GAO found that: (1) the cost accounting standards developed by the Cost Accounting Standards Board provide a sound basis for allocating CUP costs and additional standards are not needed; (2) its audit of the CUP cost allocation will determine whether Interior's cost allocation methodology is based on the Board's standards and whether Interior properly applies the cost allocation methodology; and (3) the Bureau of Reclamation's experience with the Central Valley Project's cost allocation should be helpful to Interior in allocating CUP costs.

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**Bureau of Reclamation: Information on the Federal Financial Commitment and Repayment Status of the Central Arizona Project.**

GAO/T-RCED-94-92. December 10, 1993.

ABSTRACT: It is estimated that construction of the Central Arizona Project—a massive water project designed to pump water from the Colorado River as far south as Tucson—will be completed in 1999 at a cost of \$4.7 billion, and the federal share could climb from \$1.7 billion to upwards of \$2.8 billion. The project is expected to provide Arizona residents with flood control, fish and wildlife enhancement, recreation, commercial power, groundwater conservation, and drinking water. This testimony discusses (1) the total financial commitment of the federal government to build the system and (2) the Central Arizona Water Conservation District's ability to fulfill its obligation to repay allocated project costs.

**Water Resources: Corps' Management of Reservoirs in the Missouri River Basin.**

GAO/T-RCED-94-43. October 11, 1993.

ABSTRACT: This testimony focuses on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' management of the Missouri River reservoir system under drought conditions during 1989-90. GAO concludes that the Corps acted consistently with its drought contingency plan in releasing water from the reservoir system during the three-year period and that all of the purposes served by the reservoirs, except flood control, were harmed. The plan does not reflect current economic conditions in the Missouri River Basin. Contrary to the Corps' beliefs, federal statutes do not require the Corps to give recreation a lower priority than other project purposes—flood control, navigation, irrigation, and hydroelectric power—in deciding on water releases. Congress should consider legislation that would require the Corps to set priorities for operating its reservoir projects on the basis of the economic, environmental, social, and other benefits of all authorized purposes.

**Water Resources: Factors That Lead to Successful Cost Sharing in Corps Projects.**

GAO/RCED-93-114. August 12, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is required to develop a cost-sharing partnership with local sponsors of water projects that provide flood control, water supply, hydroelectric power, and recreation. The sponsors are generally local and state governments or other government groups, such as flood control districts or port authorities. GAO surveyed

sponsors and found that the following three factors contributed most significantly to a successful relationship: (1) good communications between the Corps and the sponsor, (2) the sponsor's significant involvement in decisions and activities, and (3) the Corps' responses to the sponsor's concerns about cost-sharing agreements. Sponsors were concerned about their inability to pay their share of study or project costs. The inability to pay generally related to flood control/damage projects in the Dallas and Chicago regions. The sponsors' other main concern involved changes in the cost-sharing agreements at different Corps review levels.

**Clean Water Act: Private Property Takings Claims as a Result of the Section 404 Program.** GAO/RCED-93-176FS. August 11, 1993.

ABSTRACT: This fact sheet identifies private property takings claims that have been filed with the U.S. Court of Federal Claims as a result of regulatory actions taken under the Clean Water Act. GAO also provides information on the actual and potential liability of the U.S. government—including the amounts of the claims, interest, and attorneys' fees and other litigation costs—and on federal agencies' costs in litigating these claims.

**Water Resources: Federal Efforts to Monitor and Coordinate Responses to Drought.** GAO/RCED-93-117. June 8, 1993.

ABSTRACT: Collecting and reporting data on drought conditions in the United States is a collaborative, multilevel effort led by the federal government. State and local governments make important contributions of work and funding to this effort. Federal, state, and other users are generally satisfied with the data on drought that are collected and distributed by federal agencies. No permanent federal organization is responsible for monitoring drought conditions and planning the government's response. Instead, individual agencies carry out these activities and arrange to cooperate with one another. When drought has been severe or has had widespread geographic impact, temporary interagency committees have been set up to coordinate the response. Because of the increasingly severe effects that periodic droughts have had on the economy, however, temporary committees may no longer be able to handle the long-term planning needed for such droughts, promptly resolve policy differences among federal agencies, or coordinate the federal response to drought.



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**Water Resources: Highfield Water Company Should Not Receive Compensation From the U.S. Army.** GAO/RCED-93-49. May 10, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The Highfield Water Company has claimed that it should receive between \$17.7 million and \$52 million from the U.S. Army as compensation for lost property and damages. Highfield argues that Fort Ritchie, located in Maryland, excessively pumped the aquifer during periods of drought between 1974 and 1978, thereby depriving the company of water it needed to meet its customers' needs. As a result, the Maryland Public Service Commission revoked the company's right to exercise its franchise to sell water to its customers. Highfield is appealing for legislative relief, asserting that it has never received a fair hearing on the merits of its case since court actions were dismissed on technical grounds. After reviewing the case, GAO concludes that Highfield was not damaged by the Fort's reasonable use of the groundwater and that Highfield neither owned nor had superior rights to the water. As a result, GAO does not believe that Highfield is entitled to any compensation from the Army.

**Water Resources: The Corps of Engineers' Dredging Program for Small Business Firms.** GAO/RCED-92-239BR. August 3, 1992.

ABSTRACT: This briefing report looks at whether the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers program to set aside or restrict part of its dredging contracts for small businesses significantly boosts federal costs because there is less competition for restricted-bid contracts. GAO evaluated existing studies on program costs and competition (measured by the number of bids per contract) done on behalf of large and small dredging firms. GAO also did a separate analysis of dredging contracts the Corps awarded during a recent 31-month period.

**Water Resources: Future Needs for Confining Contaminated Sediment in the Great Lakes Region.** GAO/RCED-92-89. July 17, 1992.

ABSTRACT: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has built 26 confined disposal facilities since 1974 to hold bottom sediment dredged from harbors, channels, and other waterways in the Great Lakes area. This mud often contains contaminants, such as chemicals from industry or agricultural runoff, that require special handling. Six of the facilities are already filled to capacity, and 18 others are expected to be filled by 2006. Twelve more facilities are planned, and more sites will be needed in the foreseeable future. The Corps is now deciding whether it or state and local governments should pay the construction costs. Construction of more

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facilities is at a virtual standstill. Because of concerns from communities and environmental groups, finding suitable disposal sites for contaminated dredged material has been difficult and time-consuming. As a result, the Corps has deferred some dredging and commercial and recreational navigation in some areas has been harmed.

**Bureau of Reclamation: Central Valley Project Cost Allocation Overdue and New Method Needed.** GAO/RCED-92-74. March 31, 1992.

ABSTRACT: This report examines how the Bureau of Reclamation allocates construction costs for the Central Valley Project. Located in California's Central Valley Basin, the project is the Bureau's largest water resource project, with authorized construction costs totaling more than \$6.5 billion as of September 1990. While primarily devoted to irrigation, the project also provides flood control, hydroelectric power, and recreation uses. GAO (1) discusses the status of the Bureau's effort to reallocate project costs in accordance with a 1986 congressional mandate, (2) describes the Bureau's current cost allocation method, and (3) discusses alternative cost allocation methods.

**Water Resources: Corps' Management of Ongoing Drought in the Missouri River Basin.** GAO/RCED-92-4. January 27, 1992.

ABSTRACT: The Missouri River basin, encompassing all of Nebraska and part of nine other North Central states, is experiencing its most severe drought since the 1930s. GAO reviewed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' management of the Missouri River reservoir system under drought conditions in 1988, 1989, and 1990. Acting consistently with its drought contingency plan, the Corps reduced winter release rates, shortened navigation seasons on the Missouri River, and reduced water levels in the navigation channel. As a result, 17 percent less water was released during the three-year period than would have been released under normal operating conditions. The drought and the Corps' response to it harmed all reservoir efforts save one—flood control. The Corps' contingency plan, however, relies on assumptions about the amount of water needed for navigation and irrigation made in 1944 that are no longer valid, and the plan does not reflect the current economic conditions in the Missouri River basin. The Corps' ongoing study of its operation of the reservoir system is expected to address these issues. The Corps insists that, unless Congress approves changes to existing operating priorities, it must continue to give recreation a lower operating priority than other authorized purposes even if this lower priority results in decreased system

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benefits. GAO sees no appropriate basis for the Corps' view. A lawsuit filed in federal court by three upper basin states questions the legality of the Corps' position on recreation.

**Water Resources: Local Sponsors' Views on Corps' Implementation of Project Cost Sharing.** GAO/RCED-92-11FS. November 15, 1991.

ABSTRACT: The Water Resources Development Act of 1986 requires the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop a cost-sharing partnership with local sponsors whose active participation and financial commitment are essential to accomplish water resource development projects. The sponsors generally are local or state governments or other public entities, like flood control districts or port authorities, that ask the Corps' for help. This fact sheet presents the views of local sponsors on the Corps' implementation of cost sharing under the act, including the sponsors' views on their relationship with the Corps and the impact of cost sharing on accomplishing proposed projects, such as flood control or navigation projects.

**Reclamation Law: Changes Needed Before Water Service Contracts Are Renewed.** GAO/T-RCED-92-13. October 29, 1991.

ABSTRACT: This testimony, which is based on an earlier report (GAO/RCED-91-175, Aug. 22, 1991), addresses changes needed before renewal of long-term water service contracts in the Bureau of Reclamation's Central Valley Project in California. Significant environmental and water use problems are associated with irrigation practices carried out under existing water service contracts. These irrigation practices have contributed to selenium poisoning and increasing salinity in the San Joaquin Valley; some farmers use Central Valley Project water to produce crops that are also eligible for subsidies under Agriculture Department commodity programs; and with 85 percent of the Central Valley Project water dedicated to irrigation under the contracts, the water supply available for wildlife habitat is inadequate. GAO is concerned that renewing the Central Valley Project's 238 contracts for the same quantities of water for up to 40 years could severely hamper efforts to address existing and future problems. GAO recommends that Congress place a moratorium on all Central Valley Project contract renewals, while temporarily extending existing contracts, and amend legislation to explicitly allow contract renewals for lesser quantities of water and shorter periods of time. GAO also recommends that the Department of the Interior fully analyze the impact of contract renewal and alternative contract provisions.

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**Water Subsidies: Views on Proposed Reclamation Reform Legislation.** GAO/T-RCED-91-90. September 12, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed four legislative proposals to amend the Reclamation Reform Act of 1982, which permits multiple landholdings to continue to be operated collectively as one large farm while individually qualifying for federally subsidized water. GAO noted that: (1) if the farm operations in the five case studies remain constant, each of the proposals could limit federally subsidized water to some or all of the operations; (2) three of the five large farm operations in the case studies could continue to receive subsidized water on land in excess of the 960-acre limit, under the House bill; (3) under the Senate bill, four of the five large farm operations would be able to continue to receive subsidized water on more than 960 acres; (4) three of the large farm operations could continue to receive subsidized water on land in excess of the 960-acre limit under the Bureau of Reclamation's draft bill; and (5) the Subcommittee on Water, Power, and Off-Shore Energy Resources's draft bill could stop the flow of federally subsidized water to more than 960 acres in all five of the case studies. GAO believes that since farmers have ample financial incentive to reorganize their operations in response to any new reclamation legislation enacted, some farmers are likely to reorganize again to be eligible to receive additional federally subsidized water.

**Reclamation Law: Changes Needed Before Water Service Contracts Are Renewed.** GAO/RCED-91-175. August 22, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO: (1) identified environmental and water use problems associated with the irrigation practices carried out under the Bureau of Reclamation's water service contracts in the Central Valley Project (CVP); and (2) determined whether contract renewals would allow such problems to continue. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) agricultural drainage has degraded the quality of the San Joaquin Valley's water supply and soil, poisoning wildlife and threatening agricultural productivity with selenium accumulation and increasing salinity; (2) since most CVP water is dedicated to irrigation through water service contracts, the supply of water available for wildlife habitat is not adequate; (3) some farmers use CVP water to produce crops that are also eligible for subsidies under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) commodity programs, causing Congress to express concern over the apparent inconsistency between the Bureau's programs for increasing agricultural production through inexpensive subsidized water and USDA programs for raising prices while limiting production; (4) increased

irrigation efficiency and conservation could reduce environmental degradation caused by agricultural runoff and drainage, while freeing water currently diverted for irrigation and other uses, but the low cost of federal irrigation water is a disincentive to increased irrigation efficiency; (5) the Department of the Interior believes that, since long-term renewal of contracts for the same quantities of water is nondiscretionary, it is not required to change its provisions as a result of environmental impact statements; and (6) continuing irrigation practices carried out under existing contract provisions compromise other national interests such as environmental protection and wildlife conservation.

**Water Resources: Corps Lacks Authority for Water Supply Contracts.** GAO/RCED-91-151. August 20, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a legislative requirement, GAO examined whether the Army Corps of Engineers has the legislative authority to operate nine water reservoirs for the purposes for which they are being managed. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) with one exception, the Corps has the authority to operate the nine reservoirs for the purposes for which they are being managed; (2) in that exception, the Corps improperly cited the Water Supply Act of 1958 in reallocating storage capacity to municipal and industrial (M&I) water supply and entering into six long-term contracts to supply water to M&I users without expanding those reservoirs; (3) the authority under the Water Supply Act to supply water for M&I needs is limited to what may be accomplished through the construction or expansion of reservoirs, and the act does not provide authority to reallocate existing water storage capacity for M&I purposes at reservoirs previously constructed or modified; and (4) the Corps used the act to enter into 38 water supply contracts and was planning to enter into similar contracts in the future.

**Water Resources: Corps' Management of 1990 Flooding in the Arkansas, Red, and White River Basins.** GAO/RCED-91-172BR. August 1, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO examined the Army Corps of Engineers' operation of its reservoirs in the Arkansas, Red, and White River basins during the May 1990 flooding that caused severe damage in Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma to determine whether the Corps followed operating procedures in capturing and releasing the water from nine reservoirs in the three basins before, during, and after the flood. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the Corps generally operated the nine

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reservoirs in accordance with its operating procedures before, during, and after the May 1990 flooding; (2) there was no evidence that the Corps released water from six of the reservoirs contrary to its procedures; and (3) in two cases, the Corps released water contrary to its operating procedures and prolonged the flooding of rural lands predominantly in Texas and Oklahoma.

**Water Resources: Bonneville's Irrigation and Drainage System Is Not Economically Justified.** GAO/RCED-91-73. January 31, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO prepared a: (1) benefit-cost analysis of the Irrigation and Drainage (I&D) system of the Central Utah Project Bonneville Unit; and (2) financial impacts analysis measuring the federal cost of not completing the I&D system. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the federal government spent or was contractually obligated for a total of about \$320 million for the I&D system; (2) proposed legislation providing for the completion of the system, with some changes, would cost an additional \$178 million in federal funds; (3) completion of the I&D system was not economically justified, since the U.S. economy would realize a benefit of only 28 cents for every dollar of project costs; and (4) the financial impacts on the federal government of not completing the I&D system ranged from savings of \$133 million, if Congress decided to reallocate sunk costs, to an additional cost of \$54 million if Congress decided to forgive the repayment of sunk costs.

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# Timber Management

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**Forest Service: Observations on the Emergency Salvage Sale Program.** GAO/T-RCED-96-38. November 29, 1995.

ABSTRACT: Salvage timber involves dead or dying trees, much of which would be marketable if harvested before it rots. In the past, many sales of salvage timber were delayed, altered, or withdrawn, and some of the timber deteriorated and became unsalable. In response to the millions of acres of salvage timber caused by the devastating fires of 1994, Congress established an emergency salvage timber sale program, which was designed to increase the harvesting of salvage timber by easing environment procedures and eliminating the administrative appeals process. GAO testified that it is too early to say to what extent the changes introduced by the program will boost sales because few sales have been made since the program became effective. Some salvage sale offerings have failed to receive bids mainly because of the terms and conditions of the sales, such as the minimum bid or specific logging requirements or the volume of timber being offered, were unacceptable to potential buyers. In addition, because of the short-term nature of the emergency salvage sale program, more comprehensive information on the universe of marketable salvage timber may help Congress as it assesses the program's impact and whether additional resources are needed to support it.

**Forest Service: Distribution of Timber Sales Receipts Fiscal Years 1992-94.** GAO/RCED-95-237FS. September 8, 1995.

ABSTRACT: Over the years, the Forest Service's annual reports to Congress have indicated that receipts from the timber sales program exceeded the expense of preparing and administering the sales. However, these reports did not show the extent to which timber sales receipts were distributed to various Forest Service funds or accounts established for specific purposes, such as reforesting the land and making payments to the states in which the forests are located. GAO found that during fiscal years 1992-94, the Forest Service collected nearly \$3 billion in timber sales receipts and distributed about \$2.7 billion, or 90 percent, to various Forest Service funds or accounts for specific purposes. The Forest Service deposited the remaining receipts—about \$300 million—in the General Fund of the Treasury. Outlays for preparing and administering timbers sales totaled about \$1.3 billion for the same period.

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**Private Timberlands: Private Timber Harvests Not Likely to Replace Declining Federal Harvests.** GAO/RCED-95-51. February 16, 1995.

ABSTRACT: Timberlands in Washington state, Oregon, and California are owned by the federal government, state and local governments, and the forest products industry or other private parties. Timber harvest volumes from all these sources have decreased during the past five years. Most notable, however, is the drop on federal lands, mainly as a result of efforts to protect the habitats of threatened or endangered species. This report discusses (1) trend data on private timberland acreage and on volumes of timber harvested; (2) requirements for reforestation and the use of active timber management practices, such as fertilization or thinning, on private timberlands; (3) incentive programs to encourage private landowners to actively manage their timberlands and other factors that influence their land management decisions; and (4) federal tax provision that affect timber management decisions, including the changes that occurred in the 1986 Tax Reform Act.

**Tongass Timber Reform Act: Implementation of the Act's Contract Modification Requirements.** GAO/RCED-95-2. January 31, 1995.

ABSTRACT: In Alaska's Tongass National Forest, two companies—the Ketchikan Pulp Company and the Alaska Pulp Corporation—have held 50-year contracts to cut timber. The Forest Service maintains that its existing policy provides consistent treatment of credits in contracts that timber harvesters are awarded for building harvest-related roads. GAO disagrees, believing that the policy gives Ketchikan Pulp a competitive advantage by allowing it to apply “ineffective” road credits for a much longer period than timber harvesters that must use short-term contracts. Through the end of fiscal year 1993, Ketchikan Pulp used road credits to pay for 73 percent of the timber harvested. Also, some streamside buffers did not meet the 100-foot minimum. The Forest Service has since taken steps to ensure that this requirement is met. GAO also found that the Forest Service was not following its policy of documenting the environmental effects of changes made to planned timber-harvest boundaries.

**Forest Service: Factors Affecting Timber Sales in Five National Forests.** GAO/RCED-95-12. October 28, 1994.

ABSTRACT: In recent years, debate about the future of the national forest system has focused on ensuring that timber harvests do not exceed the forests' ability to replenish the available supply of timber. An important



component of managing forests on a sustained-yield basis is each forest's "allowable sale quantity"—an estimate of the maximum volume of timber that can be sold from each forest over a 10-year period without impairing other uses of the forest, such as recreation or wildlife habitat. GAO reviewed the allowable sale quantities and the timber sales at five national forests—Deschutes and Mt. Hood in Oregon, Gifford Pinchot in Washington, Ouachita in Arkansas, and Chattahoochee-Oconee in Georgia. The Forest Service did not meet allowable sale quantities in the five forests for a variety of reasons, including (1) limitations in the data and estimating techniques on which the allowable sale quantities were originally based, (2) new forest management issues and changing priorities, and (3) rising or unanticipated costs associated with preparing timber sales and administering harvests. Although forest officials believed that the Service has used the best information available to develop the allowable sale quantities, they later failed to meet these levels. As a result, timber sales for each of the five forests between fiscal years 1991 and 1993 were significantly below the average annual allowable sale quantity.

**Forest Service: Management of Reforestation Program Has Improved, but Problems Continue.** GAO/RCED-94-257. September 15, 1994.

ABSTRACT: In the 1930 Knutson-Vandenberg Act, Congress attempted to sustain the nation's forests by establishing a fund—today totaling more than \$800 million—to reforest, improve timber stands, and improve other renewable resources in timber sale areas that have been harvested. The Forest Service annually collects about \$230 million from timber purchasers for reforestation and other activities and deposits it in the fund. In response to congressional concerns over the adequacy of Forest Service control of these funds and their use for appropriate projects, GAO reviewed the Forest Service's management of the fund. This report describes (1) how the Forest Service plans, implements, and manages Knutson-Vandenberg projects and (2) what changes the Forest Service has made since 1990 in response to previous internal and Office of Inspector General reviews of the program and what additional changes may be necessary.

**Forestry Functions: Unresolved Issues Affect Forest Service and BLM Organizations in Western Oregon.** GAO/RCED-94-124. May 17, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), part of the Interior Department, and the Forest Service, part of the Agriculture Department, together manage 7.2 million acres of land in western Oregon. Both

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agencies manage portions of these lands for timber production and have parallel forestry organizations in several locations. This report examines the possibility of the two agencies consolidating their forestry duties. GAO summarizes these agencies' past and ongoing reorganization efforts and the potential legal and other constraints affecting any consolidation.

**Forest Service: Status of Efforts to Achieve Cost Efficiency.**

GAO/RCED-94-185FS. April 26, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Congress requested that the Forest Service prepare a cost study for its timber program that would analyze how to achieve an annual cost reduction of at least five percent. The Forest Service's April 1993 report on timber cost efficiency discussed such areas as the overall timber program, the program's organization, the Timber Sale Program Information Reporting System, financial management, and attempts to monitor cost efficiency. In the year since the study was issued, the Forest Service has made progress toward completing 21 of 23 action items targeted for completion by October 1993 or October 1994. The results of the regional offices' cost efficiency efforts have been mixed. In addition, the Forest Service has undertaken other, nontimber initiatives, such as reorganizing and downsizing, that could improve the agency's overall efficiency. Overall, from fiscal year 1992 to fiscal year 1993, the Forest Service reduced its timber program expenses nationally by about 7.2 percent. Total annual timber program expenses declined in six of the nine regions during this period. However, six of the nine regions' timber sales programs showed a net loss when annual expenses were deducted from revenues for fiscal year 1993.

**Timber Sale Contract Defaults: Forest Service Needs to Strengthen Its Performance Bond and Contract Provisions.**

GAO/RCED-94-5. October 28, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The Forest Service has assessed damages totaling about \$302 million against purchasers who defaulted in timber sale contracts between January 1982 and March 1993. The Forest Service has collected about \$42 million, or 14 percent, of this amount and has determined that about \$136 million is uncollectible for a variety of reasons, such as the bankruptcy or the death of the purchaser. Continuing litigation has been the main reason for the delays in the final disposition of the remaining \$124 million, most of which is owed by 14 timber purchasers. When many of these defaulted contracts were awarded, the Forest Service had few safeguards in place to protect the government against losses from defaults.

Since then, the Forest Service has begun requiring purchasers to make down payments and has raised the dollar limit on the performance bond that purchasers must provide. In addition, the Forest Service is considering retaining the down payments until the contracts are substantially complete and clarifying the liability provisions in a new performance bond—measures that GAO strongly supports.

**Cancer Treatment: Actions Taken to More Fully Utilize the Bark of Pacific Yews on Federal Land.** GAO/RCED-92-231. August 31, 1992.

ABSTRACT: The Pacific yew, source of the anticancer drug Taxol, grows primarily in Pacific Northwest forests managed by the U.S. government. In fiscal year 1991, neither the Forest Service nor the Bureau of Land Management had effective timber sale administrative procedures or utilization standards. As a result, some usable yew bark went uncollected that year. In fiscal year 1992, both agencies in conjunction with Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. and its yew bark collectors have worked to ensure more complete utilization of yew bark. If properly implemented, the agencies' fiscal year 1992 program plans and associated operational procedures should help ensure that more of this limited and valuable resource is recovered.

**Forest Service Timber Sales Program: Questionable Need for Contract Term Extensions and Status of Efforts to Reduce Costs.**

GAO/T-RCED-92-58. April 28, 1992.

ABSTRACT: This testimony centers on two issues concerning the timber sales program run by the Forest Service. GAO discusses (1) a 1-year extension in the length of timber sales contracts in response to dramatic reductions in the prices for wood products and (2) the Forest Service's response to a fiscal year 1991 directive to reduce costs in its timber sales program.

**Comments on Below-Cost Timber Bills.** GAO/RCED-92-160R. April 1, 1992.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO commented on whether two bills regarding below-cost timber sales on national forests addressed three previous GAO recommendations regarding such sales. GAO noted that both of the bills addressed GAO recommendations that the Forest Service: (1) expand the proposed below-cost sales policy beyond forests as a whole to individual sales; and (2) define the minimum rate for timber sales bids as the cost of timber sale preparation and administration

and ensure that the sale process recovers those costs. GAO also noted that neither of the bills addressed the recommendation to amend the timber sale process to include an initial below-cost determination during the sale preparation process in order to avoid unnecessary costs.

**Cancer Treatment: Efforts to More Fully Utilize the Pacific Yew's Bark.** GAO/T-RCED-92-36. March 4, 1992.

ABSTRACT: The bark of the Pacific yew is the only approved source of taxol, an anticancer drug that has been shown effective in treating ovarian cancer. The limited supply of Pacific yew bark coupled with existing and potential demand mean that the bark needs to be as fully utilized as possible. For a variety of reasons, however, not all the bark that could have been collected on federal lands in 1991 was collected. Both responsible federal land-managing agencies and private industry are taking or planning actions to more fully use the bark, and increased utilization should be seen in 1992. These actions appear to be consistent with provisions of the Pacific Yew Act of 1991 intended to achieve full utilization of the bark.

**Forest Service: The Flathead National Forest Cannot Meet Its Timber Goal.** GAO/RCED-91-124. May 10, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO collected information on planned and actual amounts of timber offered for sale from the Flathead National Forest in northwestern Montana.

FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the Forest Service fell short of its Flathead timber-offering goal for the last 5 years by about 37 percent; (2) the goal for timber sales in a forest plan may not exceed the allowable sale quantity (ASQ), the maximum amount that the forest can produce in perpetuity after giving balanced consideration to other multiple issues in accordance with environmental standards; (3) the Flathead forest plan specified an ASQ of 500 million board feet (MMBF) for the first 5 years; (4) the Forest Service experienced difficulty in offering many proposed sales due to environmental organizations' concern over their effects on wildlife and water quality; (5) even if planned sales had met all environmental standards, the forest only had sufficient funding to prepare 443 MMBF; (6) the Flathead's continued inability to meet its original, unattainable ASQ-based goal will contribute to production cutbacks and mill closures as early as fiscal year 1990; and (7) Flathead officials have no immediate plans to revise the present 10-year forest plan ASQ.

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**First Audit of the Forest Service's Financial Statements.**

GAO/T-AFMD-91-4. April 25, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed its audit of the Forest Service's financial statements for fiscal year (FY) 1988, focusing on whether: (1) there were weaknesses in internal controls; (2) accounting systems adequately accounted for resources received and spent; (3) internal management adequately reported problems; and (4) financial reporting provided accurate and reliable information regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of operations and future resource needs. GAO noted that the: (1) Service's inaccurate financial information made it difficult to determine the true value of its property; (2) Service reported two violations of the Antideficiency Act, involving its overobligations of National Forest System budgetary resources by \$4,348,805, and its overobligation of its FY 1987 Job Corps allotment by \$582,550; (3) Service's timber program accounting system included inaccurate values for timber and related facilities, but the Service subsequently initiated actions to ensure that the system accurately recognizes costs in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles; and (4) Service's external reports did not include information that accurately reflected the results of its operations or its financial position.

**Forest Service Needs to Improve Efforts to Reduce Below-Cost Timber Sales.** GAO/T-RCED-91-43. April 25, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the Forest Service's below-cost timber sales, focusing on: (1) timber sales that did not recover their associated costs; and (2) Service efforts to reduce below-cost timber sales. GAO noted that: (1) fiscal year 1990 below-cost timber sales resulted in unrecovered timber-sale preparation and administration expenses of at least \$35.6 million; (2) unrecovered costs ranged from \$14.9 million for large sales and \$20.7 million for small sales when only preparation and administration costs were considered, to \$68.4 million for large sales and \$43.8 million for small sales when all operating costs plus payments to states were calculated; (3) sale preparation and administration costs at the 122 national forests ranged from \$15 per thousand board feet of harvested timber to \$348 per thousand board feet; and (4) the Service issued a draft policy to reduce losses from below-cost timber sales. In addition, GAO noted that the Service needed to take such additional actions to reduce below-cost timber sales as: (1) extending consideration of below-cost sales to the individual sales level; (2) considering its costs when setting minimum rates for a timber sale; and (3) evaluating whether the benefits

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of a below-cost sale justify the unrecovered costs prior to incurring most preparation costs.

**Forest Service Needs to Improve Efforts to Protect the Government's Financial Interests and Reduce Below-Cost Timber Sales.** GAO/T-RCED-91-42. April 24, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the Forest Service's efforts to: (1) collect on defaulted timber sales contracts and reduce further defaults; and (2) reduce the number of below-cost timber sales. GAO noted that: (1) the Service collected about \$35 million of the \$302 million in damages that it assessed from defaulted contracts and was taking steps to improve its collection processes; (2) the Service's key contracting measures were similar to other timber sellers' measures, although the Service and one federal timber seller returned or credited down payments or deposits before contractors substantially completed the contracts; (3) such practices lessened the Service's security in terms of access to funds in the event of a default; (4) in fiscal year 1990, the Service incurred timber sale preparation and administration expenses of \$35.6 million that it could not recover as a result of below-cost timber sales; and (5) preparation and administrative costs varied greatly by forest. GAO also noted that the Service issued a draft policy aimed at reducing losses caused by below-cost timber sales, but the policy left gaps in a comprehensive approach, since the Service: (1) would not subject many below-cost sales to review; (2) did not consider costs when setting minimum prices for advertised timber sales; and (3) did not evaluate on a timely basis whether the benefits of a below-cost sale justified the unrecoverable cost.

**Better Reporting Needed on Reforestation and Timber Stand Improvement.** GAO/T-RCED-91-31. April 16, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the Forest Service's reporting of its reforestation and timber stand improvement activities. GAO noted that: (1) the Service did not provide specific guidance to regional offices on identifying and reporting reforestation and timber service improvement needs; (2) Service reports understated reforestation needs because it failed to report accurate information about areas requiring reforestation following forest fires or other natural disasters; (3) for fiscal year 1990, the Service reported that 1.2 million acres required reforestation or timber stand improvement; (4) nine Service regions used several methods to identify and report reforestation needs resulting from forest fires or other natural disasters; (5) each service region followed its own criteria for

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defining timber stand improvement needs; and (6) none of the regions certified and reported all reforestation and timber stand improvement achievements, making it difficult for Congress to accurately assess reforestation and timber stand improvement achievements.

**Tongass National Forest: Contractual Modification Requirements of the Tongass Timber Reform Act.** GAO/RCED-91-133. March 28, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a legislative requirement, GAO reviewed the Department of Agriculture's compliance with the Tongass Timber Reform Act, focusing on the implementation of modifications to two long-term timber sale contracts to eliminate the contractors' competitive advantage over independent short-term contractors. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the Forest Service made extensive revisions to the two long-term timber sale contracts, generally by adopting and modifying provisions from independent short-term timber sale contracts to meet the act's requirements; (2) all modifications to the long-term contracts, except purchaser road credits, complied with the act's requirements; and (3) the modifications did not specify how the Service would perform environmental assessments or how large an area they would cover. GAO believes that: (1) although the contract modifications did not specify exactly how the Service would implement them, the modifications will require extensive additional effort on the part of the Service; and (2) the manner in which the Service implements the modifications will determine its compliance with the act's requirements.

**Financial Audit: Forest Service's Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 1988.** GAO/AFMD-91-18. March 18, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO examined the Forest Service's financial statements for the fiscal year ended September 30, 1988. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the central accounting system did not integrate all separate accounting and reporting systems; (2) internal control policies and procedures within individual accounting and reporting systems failed to ensure that financial information was reliable and in compliance with prescribed accounting principles; (3) the general ledger was unable to produce accurate and timely financial reports, since the Service failed to integrate it with its accounting and reporting systems; (4) the Timber Sale Program Information Reporting System (TSPIRS) was not in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles; (5) the Service violated the Anti-Deficiency Act by overobligating the National Forest System's funds and the Job Corps account's allotment; and (6) except as noted, the

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financial statements presented fairly the Service's financial position, and the results of its operations, in conformity with generally accepted accounting principals applied on a consistent basis.

**Forest Service: Better Reporting Needed on Reforestation and Timber Stand Improvement.** GAO/RCED-91-71. March 15, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO analyzed the reliability of the Forest Service reporting on national forest land: (1) needing reforestation or timber stand improvement; and (2) where reforestation or timber stand improvement activities have been successful. FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) Service reports understated reforestation needs and did not always identify all needs resulting from forest fires and other natural disasters; (2) from fiscal years 1985 to 1990, reported reforestation needs rose from about 822,000 acres to over 1.2 million acres, while reported timber stand improvement needs decreased from 1.5 million to 1.2 million acres; (3) the nine Service regions used several different methods to identify and report reforestation needs resulting from forest fires or other natural disasters; (4) each Service region followed its own criteria for defining timber stand improvement needs; and (5) none of the regions certified and reported all reforestation and timber stand improvement achievements, making it difficult for Congress to accurately assess the reforestation and timber stand improvement achievements.



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# Native Americans, Bureau of Indian Affairs

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**Vacant Positions in the Bureau of Indian Affairs.** GAO/RCED-96-14R.  
October 6, 1995.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on end of fiscal year (FY) staffing at the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), focusing on the: (1) occupations that have the highest number of vacant positions; and (2) number of vacant positions in law enforcement and social services. GAO noted that BIA: (1) had about 14,600 employees on board at the end of FY 1993 and 13,700 at the end of FY 1994; (2) had over 4,300 vacant positions as of June 1995; (3) occupations with the most vacant positions included laborer, secretary, teacher, forestry aid, and equipment operator; and (4) had 193 vacant positions in law enforcement and 76 vacant positions in social services.

**Indian Trust Fund Settlement Legislation.** GAO/AIMD/OGC-95-237R.  
September 29, 1995.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided draft legislation that is intended to help the Bureau of Indian Affairs reconcile Indian trust fund accounts. GAO noted that the draft legislation would require mediated negotiation and binding arbitration to resolve disputed account balances.

**Navajo-Hopi Relocation Program.** GAO/RCED-95-155R. April 27, 1995.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on the relocation of the Navajo and Hopi Indian Tribes, focusing on: (1) whether the Navajo and Hopi Relocation Office certified more families for benefits than it relocated in 1994; and (2) the number of families that still have to be relocated or certified as of December 31, 1994. GAO noted that: (1) as of December 31, 1994, 4,507 families had applied for relocation assistance, 3,302 families were certified for relocation benefits, and 2,560 families had been relocated; (2) although the Relocation Office certified 160 families for benefits and in 1994, it only relocated 102 of these families; (3) certifications outnumbered relocations mainly because previous ineligibility determinations were reversed; (4) 742 families certified for relocation had not been relocated as of December 31, 1994; (5) the 660 families originally found to be ineligible for assistance could have their original ineligibility determinations overturned during review; and (6) there may be as many as 100 additional Navajo families eligible for relocation assistance, but these families have never applied for such assistance.

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**Indian Health Service: Improvements Needed in Credentialing Temporary Physicians.** GAO/HEHS-95-46. April 21, 1995.

ABSTRACT: Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities, which provide medical care to more than one million American Indians and Alaskan Natives, supplement their staffs with temporary physicians. But weak policies have led IHS to unknowingly hire doctors who have been disciplined for such offenses as gross and repeated malpractice and unprofessional conduct. IHS does not explicitly require verifying all active and inactive state medical licenses that a temporary physician may have. Further, most IHS facilities that have contracts with companies that supply temporary physicians do not require the companies to inform IHS of the status of all medical licenses a physician may hold. In addition, IHS facilities do not have a formal system for sharing information on temporary physicians who have worked within the IHS medical system. This report also discusses what happens when requested medical services are delayed.

**Financial Management: Indian Trust Fund Accounts Cannot Be Fully Reconciled.** GAO/T-AIMD-95-94. March 8, 1995.

ABSTRACT: The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has spent four years and \$16 million to reconcile Indian trust fund accounts. BIA is requesting \$6.8 million for fiscal year 1996 to continue with the detailed reconciliation work. However, it is clear that even if more reconciliation work is done, BIA will not be able to guarantee that trust fund account balances are accurate. This is due to missing lease and accounting records; the inability to verify that all earned revenues were collected, posted to the correct account, and disbursed to the proper party; and the lack of accurate, up-to-date ownership information. Because the Indian trust fund accounts cannot be fully reconciled, Congress may want to consider legislating a settlement process in lieu of continuing to fund BIA's reconciliation effort.

**Indian Trust Fund Testimony Q&As.** GAO/AIMD-95-33R. December 2, 1994.

BACKGROUND: Questions were raised concerning the Department of the Interior's failure to correct serious problems in the management of Indian Trust Funds. GAO noted that: (1) although Interior officials believe that the 6-Point Trust Funds and Trust Asset Management Reform Plans will correct all serious trust fund management problems, the 6-Point Plan falls short of a comprehensive strategic plan; (2) the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) streamlining plan calls for a 50-percent reduction in staff by the end of fiscal year 1995; (3) Interior officials believe that the Department should

establish a G-Fund through the Department of the Treasury for Indian trust fund investments; (4) even if a G-Fund is established, Interior would still need to provide for both investment advisor and custodian services; (5) the American Indian Trust Fund Reform Act of 1994 establishes a mechanism for tribes to assume management and control of their trust funds; (6) the fractionated ownership group, Individual Indian Money (IIM) Reconciliation working group, and the Land Records working group have been formed to resolve issues concerning IIM accounts; (7) the 6-Point Plan does not address a number of fundamental actions needed to resolve trust fund management problems; (8) the BIA streamlining plan lacks a mission statement and information on how BIA will transfer trust fund management to tribes; and (9) a spokesperson for Indian interests would ensure that Indian interests are fully articulated and considered before program and organizational changes.

**Indian Food Stamp Proposal.** GAO/RCED-95-57R. November 30, 1994.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a legislative requirement, GAO reviewed the feasibility of eliminating the conditions for tribal organizations to administer the Food Stamp Program on Indian reservations, focusing on: (1) whether Indian tribal organizations have expressed interest in administering the program; and (2) the barriers to and effects of tribal administration of the program. GAO noted that: (1) tribal officials are unaware of federal regulations governing the Food Stamp Program and have expressed little interest in assuming program administration; (2) the barriers that would prevent tribal administration include the statutory cost-sharing requirements and the potential penalties that could be imposed for administrative errors; (3) tribal officials believe that for them to assume program administration, they will need to revise the program's infrastructure, obtain and train staff to administer the program, and modify certain program regulations to better meet the needs of Indian clients; (4) tribal administration of the Food Stamp program will likely increase administrative costs, Indian enrollment, and benefit distribution; (5) the tribes and the states would incur additional costs for coordinating and sharing information on program participation in both tribally-administered Food Stamp Programs and state-administered assistance programs; and (6) state officials believe that tribal administration of the Food Stamp Program would increase the burden on food stamp recipients participating in both tribally-administered Food Stamp Programs and state-administered assistance programs.

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**Financial Management: Focused Leadership and Comprehensive Planning Can Improve Interior's Management of Indian Trust Funds.** GAO/T-AIMD-94-195. September 26, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The Interior Department has initiatives planned or under way to address some of the long-standing problems plaguing management of the Indian Trust Funds, and additional options exist that could help it make other needed improvements. However, Interior's track record on past attempts at corrective action has not been good. Interior needs a comprehensive plan, focused leadership, and management commitment if it is to carry through on needed improvements.

**Financial Management: Focused Leadership and Comprehensive Planning Can Improve Interior's Management of Indian Trust Funds.** GAO/AIMD-94-185. September 22, 1994.

ABSTRACT: For years, the Interior Department has been unable to correct many serious financial management problems affecting the Indian trust funds, including (1) backlogs in land title and beneficial ownership determinations and recordkeeping, (2) inadequate management of natural resource assets to ensure that all earned revenues derived from natural resources are collected, (3) improper accounting practices, and (4) limited trust fund investment options. In addition to recent management initiatives to implement needed improvements, additional options would more fully address trust fund management problems. Further, more focused leadership, management commitment, and a comprehensive strategic plan would help Interior to effectively address all of its trust fund management responsibilities.

**Financial Management: Native American Trust Fund Management Reform Legislation.** GAO/T-AIMD-94-174. August 11, 1994.

ABSTRACT: GAO work reviewing Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) trust fund financial management has shown that BIA's systems, internal controls, and policies and procedures do not provide assurance that Indian trust fund balances, reported as \$2.1 billion at the end of fiscal year 1993, are accurate, or that Indian natural resource assets are adequately managed by Bureau of Land Management and the Minerals Management Service to ensure that maximum revenue is generated for tribal and individual Indian trust beneficiaries. During the past year, the Secretary of the Interior has placed greater emphasis on Indian trust programs, initiatives that are important first steps to improving Indian trust fund and asset management

programs and operations. Pending trust fund management reform legislation would enhance trust financial management reform initiatives underway at the Department of the Interior.

**Indian Health Service: Efforts to Recruit Health Care Professionals.** GAO/HEHS-94-180FS. July 7, 1994.

ABSTRACT: Indian Health Service (IHS) salary schedules for health care professionals are set on a national basis. Thus, the base pay these persons receive does not differ among IHS regions or areas. However, bonuses and allowances may be paid to doctors who agree to work in hard-to-fill locations, such as the Aberdeen Area. In many IHS areas, health care delivery has been hampered by problems in recruiting and retaining health care professionals, particularly doctors. The recruitment and retention of physicians in the Aberdeen Area has been affected by the relatively low pay; inadequate housing for medical personnel on the reservations; remoteness of the reservations; cultural differences between the doctors and their patients; and a general lack of amenities, such as shopping and dining. IHS' Aberdeen Area has a higher vacancy rate for physicians than all but one other IHS area. The vacancy rate has been particularly high, more than 31 percent, at the Pine Ridge hospital. IHS is now looking at the benefits of using a physician pay structure similar to that used by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Indian Issues: Eastern Indian Land Claims and Their Resolution.** GAO/RCED-94-157. June 22, 1994.

ABSTRACT: In late 1992, the Golden Hill Paugussett Indian Tribe filed a lawsuit claiming damages and the right to have large tracts of land in Connecticut restored to the tribe. The lawsuit asserted that land historically belonging to the tribe had been transferred without the congressional approval required by the Indian Nonintercourse Act of 1790. In response to concern about Congress' responsibilities under the act, the unpredictability of such claims, and the hardships they place on current landowners, this report (1) provides information on land claims made by eastern Indians during the past 20 years, (2) determines how these claims were resolved, and (3) identifies steps that Congress could take to mitigate the unpredictability and impact of these claims.

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**BIA Reconciliation Recommendations.** GAO/AIMD-94-138R. June 10, 1994.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a Department of the Interior request, GAO answered questions on two recommendations concerning the reconciliation of Indian trust fund accounts. GAO noted that: (1) its recommendation for an additional reconciliation procedure would ensure that earned revenues are billed and collected and would not delay the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) current reconciliation process; (2) reconciliations can only be done in cases where BIA can locate the relevant lease documents; (3) the lack of a complete documentation would impact projections of transaction error rates and reconciliation results; and (4) an accounts receivable system that indicates when payments are due would enhance BIA reconciliation efforts.

**BIA Trust Fund Reconciliations.** GAO/AIMD-94-110R. April 25, 1994.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on the status of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) efforts to correct long-standing trust fund management weaknesses. GAO noted that: (1) although BIA has made progress toward improving its Indian trust fund reconciliation and certification process, long-standing management problems have impeded BIA ability to maintain proper control and accountability over individual Indian trust accounts; (2) the Indian community has expressed concern over BIA trust fund accounting and the effectiveness of BIA investment practices; (3) BIA trust fund account balances lack credibility because BIA trust funds are not properly reconciled; (4) BIA continues to lack adequate strategic planning, staff and training, trust fund management policies and procedures, and accounting and reporting systems; and (5) BIA needs to develop a strategic Indian trust fund financial management plan, and reconciliation procedures to ensure reliable accounting and reporting and to prevent and detect fund losses.

**Financial Management: Status of BIA's Efforts to Reconcile Indian Trust Fund Accounts and Implement Management Improvements.**

GAO/T-AIMD-94-99. April 12, 1994.

ABSTRACT: The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is continuing its efforts to reconcile Indian trust fund accounts and to obtain an independent certification on the results of the reconciliation. After 3 years, BIA's reconciliation contractor has nearly finished the first of eight major tribal reconciliation tasks and a certification contractor is on board. Yet overall progress has been slow and BIA has yet to address many critical, long-standing trust fund management problems that have affected proper

control and accountability over trust fund accounts. BIA has been criticized for erroneous allocations of receipts, erroneous payments to account holders, failure to consistently invest trust fund balances, and failure to pay interest. Tribes and individual Indians continue to express concern about the accuracy of BIA's accounting for trust fund receipts and disbursements and the effectiveness of BIA's investment practices. Past audits and GAO's current work on BIA trust funds management continue to show (1) the lack of a strategic plan to guide trust fund management in the future, (2) inadequate staffing and training, (3) a lack of consistent, written trust fund management policies and procedures, and (4) inadequate systems for ensuring reliable accounting and reporting. GAO makes several recommendations aimed at ensuring better control and accountability over Indian trust funds. GAO continues to urge BIA to develop a strategic management plan for improving Indian trust fund operations.

**Juvenile Justice: Native American Pass-Through Grant Program.**

GAO/GGD-94-86FS. March 28, 1994.

ABSTRACT: This fact sheet provides information on the Native American Pass-Through Grant Program, which provides federal grants to states and localities to help improve their juvenile justice systems. GAO (1) describes how the pass-through grant program works; (2) determines the funding amounts that the states and Indian tribes received under this program for fiscal years 1991 through 1993, and (3) provides examples of how some tribes used the funds.

**Job Training Partnership Act: Labor Title IV Initiatives Could Improve Relations With Native Americans.** GAO/HEHS-94-67. March 4, 1994.

ABSTRACT: This report provides information on the Indian and Native American job training program authorized under title IV of the Job Training Partnership Act. The act targets a variety of economically disadvantaged groups, including Native Americans, to receive employment-seeking skills and job training services. GAO discusses (1) the history of the relationship between the Labor Department and the Native American community with respect to the program and (2) the extent to which the act's funds are used to provide training services, one of four allowable cost categories under that program. GAO also examines disagreements between the Labor Department and Native Americans over proposed changes to program regulations and the reasonableness of such changes.

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**BIA's Trust Fund Loss Policy.** GAO/AIMD-94-59R. January 14, 1994.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) draft policy and procedures to reconcile its Indian Trust Fund account losses. GAO found that: (1) the BIA draft policy does not address some of the weaknesses of the earlier draft; (2) the draft policy's definition of losses does not include interest that is earned but not credited to the appropriate account; (3) the draft policy does not establish the steps necessary to detect, prevent, document, and resolve trust fund losses, since BIA trust fund systems do not have a mechanism to identify losses; (4) BIA needs to explain the appropriate notification and loss calculation documentation necessary for reporting losses and make its time frames for notification consistent and clear; (5) the draft policy incorrectly states that loss of interest on a certain type of account is not an obligation of the United States; (6) the draft policy lacks procedures for account holders to respond to and comment on BIA decisions; (7) BIA should clarify the draft policy's language regarding the availability of appropriated funds for reimbursing losses and the reasons for transferring funds between accounts; and (8) BIA should change its quarterly and annual reporting of estimated losses to coincide with other significant accounting-cycle benchmarks and reports.

**Financial Management: BIA's Management of the Indian Trust Funds.** GAO/T-AIMD-93-4. September 27, 1993.

ABSTRACT: Since April 1991, GAO has testified six times before Congress on the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) management of the Indian trust funds and its efforts to reconcile and audit the trust fund accounts. BIA manages about \$2 billion in tribal money that has accumulated from payments of claims, oil and gas royalties, land use agreements, and investment income. Over the years, countless audit reports and internal studies have cited a litany of serious problems in BIA's oversight of these accounts. BIA's record has been so poor, in fact, that the Office of Management and Budget has placed trust fund accounting on its high-risk list of government programs most vulnerable to waste, fraud, and abuse. This testimony discusses (1) the status of BIA's efforts to overcome its past problems; (2) problems that still need to be addressed; and (3) provisions in H.R. 1846, the Native American Trust Fund Accounting and Management Reform Act of 1993, that can help BIA resolve some of these matters.



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**Financial Management: Creation of Bureau of Indian Affairs' Trust Fund Special Projects Team.** GAO/AIMD-93-74. September 21, 1993.

ABSTRACT: In November 1992, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) created a Special Projects Team to oversee trust fund management initiatives, including management of the ongoing trust fund account reconciliation project. The team was intended to be temporary, lasting only until the reconciliation project and other trust fund improvements were completed—possibly as long as eight years. This report examines whether BIA, in creating the team, (1) followed Interior Department guidelines, (2) notified Congress and received its approval before transferring money and staff to the team, and (3) submitted reorganization proposals to the relevant Advisory Task Force on BIA Reorganization for consideration. GAO also identifies the officials responsible for creating the team and their present jobs, as well as Interior Department and BIA efforts to investigate the circumstances surrounding the team's creation.

**Financial Management: Status of BIA's Efforts to Resolve Long-Standing Trust Fund Management Problems.** GAO/T-AFMD-93-8. June 22, 1993.

ABSTRACT: GAO has testified repeatedly on problems with the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) management of the Indian trust fund, which includes billions of dollars earned from claims, oil and gas royalties, land use agreements, and investment income. Overall, the Bureau has failed to ensure that proper control and accountability are maintained over each trust fund account. The Bureau's record has been so poor, in fact, that the Office of Management and Budget has placed trust fund accounting on its high-risk list. This testimony discusses Bureau actions to correct past problems; problems that still need to be addressed; and GAO's views on S. 925, the Native American Trust Fund Accounting and Management Reform Act of 1993, which mandates many of the improvements spelled out in the Bureau's own audits and contractor studies.

**BIA Appropriation Language.** GAO/AFMD-93-84R. June 4, 1993.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Department of the Interior's proposal to delete provisions from its 1994 appropriation act that freeze the statute of limitations on tribal and individual Indian claims against the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) management of Indian trust funds. GAO found that: (1) although the provision that tolls the statute of limitations is designed to allow interested

parties to examine and evaluate all pertinent account information and reconcile all claims arising from BIA management of accounts, few audits and reconciliations have been completed; (2) the government needs to fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities and provide account holders with a full accounting regardless of the alternative used to reconcile account balances; and (3) until Interior finds a mutually acceptable basis for determining account balances and associated losses, its proposal for deleting the provision should be rejected as premature.

**Indian Health Service: Basic Services Mostly Available; Substance Abuse Problems Need Attention.** GAO/HRD-93-48. April 9, 1993.

ABSTRACT: The five Indian Health Service area offices GAO visited—Aberdeen, Alaska, California, Navajo, and Portland—differed greatly in the way that they delivered health care services. Nonetheless, the areas reported generally similar levels in the availability of basic clinical services. The services most available were treatment services, such as routine prenatal care, and diagnostic services, such as biopsies for cancer diagnoses. Almost all patients seeking such services were able to receive them. Preventive care, such as diabetes education and dental care, was comparatively less available. Service unit officials generally named alcohol and substance abuse services as their greatest unmet health need. Despite recent increases in Indian Health Service funding for alcohol and substance abuse treatment services, the gap between the demand for and availability of services persists. In addition, the Indian Health Service lacks data on alcoholism rates among native Americans and the effectiveness of current prevention and treatment programs.

**Tribal Management of Mission Valley Power.** GAO/RCED-92-282R. September 18, 1992.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO commented on two contracts between residents of the Flathead Reservation in Montana and the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the operation and management of the Mission Valley Power utility. GAO noted that: (1) to meet the contract requirements, the utility provided special personnel, made improvements in the system, gathered quantitative data on electrical power consumption, and developed a long-range plan for electrical consumption; (2) the utility took many steps to comply with federal environmental and safety standards; and (3) nine modifications were made to the 1988 contract and one modification was made to the 1991 contract.

**Financial Management: Status of BIA's Efforts to Resolve Long-Standing Trust Fund Management Problems.** GAO/T-AFMD-92-16. August 12, 1992.

ABSTRACT: This testimony focuses on management of the Indian Trust Funds by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). GAO discusses (1) some of the long-standing weaknesses that have plagued BIA's management of the trust funds; (2) the status of BIA efforts to reconcile the trust fund accounts, including the problems that have been identified and alternatives; and (3) the status of BIA efforts to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for trust fund financial management improvement, which include implementing the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990.

**Financial Management: Problems Affecting BIA Trust Fund Financial Management.** GAO/T-AFMD-92-12. July 2, 1992.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) management of the Indian Trust Funds. GAO noted that: (1) BIA has experienced inadequate controls and accountability over many of its trust fund accounts, and the Office of Management and Budget has placed trust fund accounting on its high risk list; (2) although BIA is dependent on accurate and complete land ownership records to properly distribute revenues, audits have shown continued problems with those land records; (3) fractionated interests have impacted BIA maintenance of land ownership records and trust fund accounting, primarily because BIA must account for numerous small transactions; (4) BIA ability to properly account for trust fund monies is impacted by the processes and procedures used by the Minerals Management Service (MMS) to collect, report on, and distribute Indian oil and gas royalties; (5) BIA has difficulty using oil and gas revenue collection and distribution data it receives from MMS to ensure that revenue is credited to the proper accounts, and has developed a computer program to enable it to better analyze this information. GAO believes that, if BIA is to effectively manage the Indian trust funds, it will need to address the problems that impede accurate accounting, including factors outside of BIA control that affect account maintenance, but BIA cannot resolve those problems itself.

**Indian Issues: GAO's Analysis of Land Ownership at 12 Reservations.** GAO/T-RCED-92-75. July 2, 1992.

ABSTRACT: This testimony summarizes a recent GAO report (GAO/RCED-92-96BR, Feb. 10, 1992) on land ownership at 12 Indian

reservations. GAO discusses (1) the ownership of Indian land; (2) the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) work load in maintaining ownership records; and (3) the effect of the Indian Land Consolidation Act on multiple ownership of land tracts by small ownership interests, known as fractionation. GAO also discusses how it used BIA's computerized land records database to develop the information found in GAO's report.

**Tribal Operation of Mission Valley Power.** GAO/RCED-92-229R. June 30, 1992.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO commented on two contracts between residents of the Flathead Reservation in Montana and the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the operation and management of the Mission Valley Power utility. GAO noted that: (1) to meet the contract requirements, the utility provided special personnel, made improvements in the system, gathered quantitative data on electrical power consumption, and developed a long-range plan for electrical consumption; (2) the utility took many steps to comply with federal environmental and safety standards; and (3) nine modifications were made to the 1988 contract and one modification was made to the 1991 contract.

**Financial Management: BIA Has Made Limited Progress in Reconciling Trust Accounts and Developing a Strategic Plan.**

GAO/AFMD-92-38. June 18, 1992.

ABSTRACT: The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that proper control and accountability are maintained over each account in the Indian Trust Funds, something BIA has failed to achieve. Recent BIA efforts to reconcile and audit the Indian trust fund accounts have shown that a complete reconciliation of the accounts would be unreasonably expensive and, for many accounts, impossible. After spending 7 months and more than \$1.7 million to gather and organize account information and revise its reconciliation methodology, BIA's contractor is still trying to reconcile the fiscal year 1990 tribal account transactions. Missing records continue to be a problem. The bulk of the problems are internal to BIA—things such as poorly designed accounting systems, weak internal controls, and untrained staff. Some issues, however, are external and not under BIA's control. For instance, BIA depends on accurate and complete land ownership records to properly distribute revenues. Yet audits and studies have uncovered persistent problems with these records. In addition, the accuracy and completeness of information BIA receives from the Minerals Management Service on

royalty income has been called into question. Although BIA recognizes the seriousness of the situation, little progress has been made in resolving the problems. GAO recommends that BIA develop a comprehensive strategic plan that will address interfaces between other systems and operations affecting trust fund accounting, such as the land records and reporting by the Minerals Management Service. GAO summarized this report in testimony before Congress; see: *Financial Management: Problems Affecting BIA Trust Fund Financial Management*, by Jeffrey C. Steinhoff, Director of Civil Audits, before the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs. GAO/T-AFMD-92-12, July 2, 1992 (11 pages).

**Bureau of Indian Affairs: Long-Standing Internal Control Weaknesses Warrant Congressional Attention.** GAO/RCED-92-118. May 8, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Through its social services program, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) offers assistance to individual Indians and tribes. GAO found that two of these services, involving payments for welfare and the burial of indigents, are plagued by unjustified, improper, and inconsistent payments and are ripe for fraud and waste. These problems stem from weak internal controls—some as basic as inadequate supervision, failure to separate employee duties, and poor computer security. Similar problems have been repeatedly identified in BIA's social services program for more than a decade. The long-standing nature of internal control weaknesses and ineffective BIA efforts in the past to correct them indicate that an overall management commitment at all levels will be needed if an effective system of controls is to be established. Recent congressional initiatives to address persistent accounting and internal control weaknesses in BIA's management of Indian trust funds and the Office of Audit and Evaluation will need management support at all levels if these initiatives are to succeed. To ensure full management support, increased congressional oversight may be warranted.

**Financial Management: BIA Has Made Limited Progress in Reconciling Indian Trust Fund Accounts and Developing a Strategic Plan.** GAO/T-AFMD-92-6. April 2, 1992.

ABSTRACT: The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) manages trust funds for hundreds of thousands of individual Indians and tribes. At the end of fiscal year 1991, cumulative account balances totaled nearly \$2 billion as a result of payments from claims; oil, gas, and mineral royalties; land use agreements; investment income; and other sources. BIA's trust fund

reconciliation project, which began last summer, seeks to identify correct account balances for Indian accounts using source documents to reconstruct trust account transactions so that account holders are provided as accurate an accounting as possible. Because many accounts are between 50 and 100 years old, however, the lack of supporting documentation presents a major obstacle. This testimony examines BIA's progress in reconciling the Indian trust fund accounts and developing a strategic plan for trust fund financial management improvement.

**Welfare To Work: Effectiveness of Tribal JOBS Programs Unknown.**

GAO/HRD-92-67BR. March 19, 1992.

ABSTRACT: GAO could not assess the effectiveness of Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) programs run by Indian Tribes and Alaska Native groups or determine outcomes resulting from these programs because evaluation criteria, including well-defined program objectives, were lacking and insufficient, and reliable program data were unavailable. The economic environment in which many Indian tribes and Alaska Native organizations must operate may hinder the success of their Tribal JOBS programs. These programs are assisting participants prepare for and obtain employment at a time when few jobs are available, and unemployment on many reservations is high. In addition to poor economic conditions, tribal organizations mentioned several implementation problems, including a lack of transportation and child care for program participants.

**Indian Programs: BIA and Indian Tribes Are Taking Action to Address Dam Safety Concerns.** GAO/RCED-92-50. February 11, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Key factors contributing to the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) limited progress during the 1980s in addressing known or suspected dam deficiencies on Indian reservations—including limited staff resources, BIA's decision to encourage tribes to carry out program activities, and the absence of a management information system to help monitor and direct program activities—have, to a large degree, been addressed. A 1989 Inspector General report indicated that many BIA dams were in various stages of disrepair and in need of rehabilitation. While safety deficiencies have not been fully corrected, efforts are now under way at many BIA priority dams. The success of BIA's current dam strategy will, to a large degree, depend on how tribes and BIA carry out their program responsibilities. GAO believes that more time is needed before such an

assessment is made. An effective record-keeping and reporting system to help monitor the situation at priority dams would help BIA assess progress.

**Land Exchange: Phoenix and Collier Reach Agreement on Indian School Property.** GAO/GGD-92-42. February 10, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Legislation passed in 1988 authorized the Interior Department to swap its former Indian School property in downtown Phoenix for more than 100,000 acres of land near the Florida Everglades owned by the Collier family along with \$34.9 million in cash to set up two Indian trust funds. While most of the exchange conditions set by the law have been met, the City of Phoenix placed limitations on the uses of the Indian School land and the Barron Collier Co. had the right to match the highest bid. As a result, no competing bids for the property were received, and Congress' intent to test the value of the land by exposing the school site to meaningful competitive bidding was not met. For several reasons, GAO cannot conclude that the Florida land, along with the \$34.9 million, equals the value of the Colliers' portion of the Indian School property. For instance, the Florida land, which was possibly overvalued in 1988, has not been reevaluated since then, and its value could have fallen during the recession. GAO does not question the right of the City of Phoenix to decide how privately-owned property should be used. Yet the city's action in this case raises questions about whether a locality should have the authority to use zoning as a way of acquiring land in federal disposition programs without compensation to the federal government. Conflict arose during the Phoenix exchange because of efforts by the various entities to meet the intent of the exchange. Such natural conflict raises the issue of how future exchanges can be designed to accommodate the demands of several parties and still meet a market demand test.

**Indian Programs: Profile of Land Ownership at 12 Reservations.** GAO/RCED-92-96BR. February 10, 1992.

ABSTRACT: Fractionated ownership has occurred as titles to Indian land have passed through several generations of multiple heirs. The Indian Land Consolidation Act of 1983 seeks to reduce the extent of Indian land fractionation within reservations' boundaries. Generally, an Indian's ownership of two percent or less in a tract of land transfers to the tribe upon the individual's death, provided that the interest is incapable of earning \$100 or more in any of the five years following the Indian's death. On the basis of its work at 12 reservations cited as examples of extensive land ownership fractionation, GAO describes the (1) ownership of Indian

land administered by the Department of the Interior, (2) Bureau of Indian Affairs' workload in maintaining ownership records, and (3) act's impact on the degree of fractionated ownership.

**BIA Reconciliation Monitoring.** GAO/AFMD-92-36R. January 13, 1992.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) efforts to improve its detection and handling of Indian trust fund losses. GAO found that: (1) BIA is liable for investing trust funds above the insured limits of \$100,000; (2) the National Credit Union Administration will not cover losses in excess of the \$100,000 insurance ceiling; (3) BIA has incurred losses on investments at non-accredited, uninsured credit unions as a result of fraud and criminal activity; (4) the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) will not cover \$121,500 in losses at FDIC-insured institutions; (5) BIA will request approximately \$4 million in appropriations to cover credit union and bank losses in its next budget submission; and (6) BIA policies regarding notification and reimbursement to Indian account holders for losses due to BIA errors need to be strengthened because the policies do not address the need for loss prevention and detection systems, adequately instruct staff on how to resolve losses, address documentation requirements, and define whether losses should include interest that was earned but not credited to the appropriate account.

**Land Exchange: Phoenix Indian School Development Plan Adversely Affects Property Value.** GAO/GGD-91-111. July 25, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a legislative requirement, GAO analyzed the development proposals and rezoning process for the Department of the Interior's Phoenix Indian School site in Arizona, focusing on: (1) alternative development plans considered; (2) the plan's effect on the potential value of the property; and (3) how the plan affects the government's interests.

FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) a land use planning team, the Phoenix Planning Commission, and the Phoenix City Council proposed nine development alternatives for the Indian School property; (2) the alternatives proposed varying amounts of commercial space, parkland, hotels, and residential housing; (3) the Phoenix City Council accepted a specific plan, different from the nine alternatives, which proposed lower amounts of commercial development than some other proposals and would limit downtown development, increase residential housing, and



maximize the amount of city parkland; (4) the City Council's plan adversely affected the Indian School property's potential value, since it allows relatively less commercial space than had been granted in past zoning decisions; (5) the government could have realized more than the \$80-million minimum price had Phoenix allowed as much commercial development as deemed reasonable by Interior's contract appraiser and the GAO consultant; and (6) GAO did not estimate the property's value due to the specific plan's potentially costly requirements for reducing traffic impacts and improving open space.

**Indian Issues: Compensation Claims Analyses Overstate Economic Losses.** GAO/RCED-91-77. May 21, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the economic analyses supporting the Garrison Unit Joint Tribal Advisory Committee's (JTAC) recommendation that Indian tribes at the Fort Berthold Reservation and Standing Rock Reservation receive additional financial compensation for land the federal government acquired in 1949 and 1958 for a water resources project, focusing on: (1) the adequacy of the analyses conducted by tribal consultants; and (2) alternative methods of establishing a basis for financial compensation.

FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the consultants overestimated the tribes' economic losses, since they made overly optimistic assumptions about the tribes' economic condition prior to the loss of their land; (2) neither consultant reduced the estimate of additional compensation by the total amount that Congress previously appropriated for the acquired lands; and (3) an alternative approach for considering additional compensation would be to consider the difference between the amount of compensation the tribes believed was warranted at the time the land was taken and the compensation appropriated by Congress.

**Bureau of Indian Affairs' Efforts to Reconcile, Audit, and Manage the Indian Trust Funds.** GAO/T-AFMD-91-6. May 20, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the status of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) efforts to implement a congressionally mandated Indian trust fund reconciliation and audit project and improve financial management. GAO noted that: (1) BIA divided the project into two phases; (2) the first phase will cover over 500 tribal accounts belonging to 37 of 254 tribes; (3) the first phase will also cover 17,000 individual Indian money accounts; (4) the phase I contractor will submit a phase II plan to cover the remaining 1,500

tribal and approximately 283,000 individual Indian money accounts; (5) BIA made progress in starting the project, but it needed to ensure effective management, accounting, and reporting; (6) BIA still had not finalized its phase I reconciliation management plan; (7) BIA will have to reconstruct old accounts before it can determine an accurate balance; (8) despite the significant potential for incomplete records and the resulting problems due to the outdated accounts, BIA believed that reconciliation work will adequately disclose overpayments and inconsistent investments that resulted in lost interest; and (9) BIA lacked an adequate long-term strategy for keeping the accounts balanced.

**Indian Programs: Lack of Internal Control at Two Special Law Enforcement Units.** GAO/RCED-91-111. May 15, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed two Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) law enforcement operations, focusing on their management of: (1) a confidential fund BIA used to pay informants; (2) overtime pay; (3) travel advances; and (4) sensitive equipment.

FINDINGS: GAO found that BIA: (1) did not comply with federal requirements regarding controls over appropriated funds and did not follow numerous management procedures; (2) improperly transferred funds to private bank accounts and did not return unobligated funds to the Department of the Treasury at the end of each fiscal year, as required; (3) did not adequately account for and control fund disbursements; (4) did not comply with federal regulations requiring periodic reviews of administratively uncontrollable overtime (AUO) it paid to units and employees; (5) issued excessive travel advances to unit investigators and did not adjust or liquidate the advances, as regulations required; and (6) did not properly control sensitive equipment, such as weapons and surveillance equipment.

**Indian Issues: GAO's Assessment of Economic Analyses of Fort Berthold and Standing Rock Reservations' Compensation Claims.** GAO/T-RCED-91-30. April 12, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the economic analyses recommending that Indian tribes at two reservations receive additional financial compensation for land taken by the federal government. GAO noted that: (1) the Joint Tribal Advisory Committee (JTAC) found that the federal government did not compensate the reservations adequately and estimated the economic losses for Fort Berthold to be in the range of \$178.4 million to

\$411.8 million and \$181.2 million to \$342.9 million for Standing Rock; (2) the tribes' economic losses were overstated, because economic consultants made optimistic assumptions regarding the tribes' economic situation prior to when their land was taken; and (3) the consultants did not reduce their estimates for additional compensation by the total amount that Congress previously appropriated for the land taken. GAO also noted that: (1) three Fort Berthold tribes estimated that their land was worth \$9.4 million more than the amount Congress appropriated and the Standing Rock tribe estimated that its land was worth \$14.2 million more than the amount Congress appropriated; and (2) the GAO calculated dollar range for the three Fort Berthold tribes was \$51.8 million to \$149.2 million and \$64.5 million to \$170 million for the Standing Rock tribe.

**Bureau of Indian Affairs' Efforts to Reconcile and Audit the Indian Trust Funds.** GAO/T-AFMD-91-2. April 11, 1991.

BACKGROUND: GAO discussed the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) efforts to reconcile and audit the Indian trust funds. GAO noted that: (1) numerous audit reports have pointed out serious accounting and financial management problems and weak internal controls throughout BIA; (2) the lack of general ledger control over accounts, inaccurate data, the lack of accounting systems documentation, and inadequate management of the Indian trust funds caused numerous accounting errors; (3) the first phase of the BIA trust fund reconciliation and audit project would identify the correct account balances for over 500 tribal accounts and 17,000 individual Indian money trust accounts; and (4) BIA planned to use the first-phase results to develop plans for moving into a second phase that would cover the remaining 1,500 tribal and 283,000 individual Indian money accounts. GAO believes that: (1) legislation may be needed to provide appropriations for monies owed to account holders or relief for unrecoverable overpayments that go back many years; (2) BIA planned to implement the Department of the Interior's six-part plan to help it control fund accounting transactions, reconcile all account balances, and implement a new Interior-wide accounting system; and (3) BIA must ensure that it carries out its financial responsibilities efficiently and effectively by developing a comprehensive financial management plan for both its appropriated funds and trust fund operations.

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**Indian Programs: Use of Forest Development Funds Should Be Based on Current Priorities.** GAO/RCED-91-53. March 7, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) forestry program, focusing on BIA: (1) achievement of its timber harvest goals on commercial Indian timberland; (2) accomplishment of needed forest development; (3) controls over funds disbursement; (4) forestry program staffing since 1977; and (5) efforts to attract Indian foresters.

FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) tribes actively participated in developing multi-year forest management plans, and in planning and approving individual timber sales; (2) BIA experienced problems in keeping forest management plans current due to funding and staffing shortfalls and inability to obtain timely tribal involvement in developing plan components; (3) such factors as market conditions and compliance with relevant federal laws affected the achievement of timber harvest goals; (4) the 1977 backlog of forest development needs was incomplete and imprecise, and failed to include over 300,000 additional acres of needed timber stand improvement; (5) while BIA data indicated that needed forest development had been completed for about one-half of the backlog acreage, data on individual reservation accomplishments were uncertain; (6) dedicated funding failed to address changing development needs because it was still targeted at reducing the 1977 backlog; (7) BIA improved its controls over forest management deduction funds; (8) BIA forestry staff increased significantly since 1978; and (9) BIA had several headquarters and field-level programs to encourage Indians to study and train for the forestry profession.

**Indian Programs: Navajo-Hopi Resettlement Program.**

GAO/RCED-91-105BR. March 6, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Navajo-Hopi Resettlement Program, focusing on: (1) program status; (2) problems faced by relocatees; and (3) Navajos resisting relocation.

FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) the relocation program was not completed in 1986, as anticipated, since more families than expected applied for relocation and the Navajo reservation had insufficient land to accommodate sufficient new homesites; (2) as of December 31, 1990, 68 percent of those eligible, or 1,894 families, had relocated; (3) 99 percent of the relocated families were Navajo; (4) of the remaining 888 families awaiting relocation, 54 percent lived in inadequate homes and 35 percent experienced home

maintenance or repair problems; (5) less than half of the relocated families moved to off-reservation sites; (6) some of the families who moved to off-reservation sites experienced financial and adjustment problems; (7) 28 percent of the relocated families sold their off-reservation replacement homes primarily because they preferred life on the reservation; (8) to address problems encountered by families who had moved off the reservation, the Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation issued two program requirements to help families relocate successfully; and (9) the Office continued to work with the Navajo and Hopi tribes to avoid having to forcibly relocate Navajos resisting relocation.

**Indian Health Service: Funding Based on Historical Patterns, Not Need.** GAO/HRD-91-5. February 21, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO obtained information on: (1) Indian Health Service (IHS) funding distribution methods and the funds allocated for fiscal year (FY) 1980 through FY 1990; (2) per-capita funding for the Oklahoma IHS area; and (3) the effect of IHS funding constraints on health services delivery in Oklahoma, with special attention to the Contract Health Services (CHS) program.

FINDINGS: GAO found that: (1) IHS distributed its funding among its 12 service delivery areas based primarily on previous-year funding and rarely used needs-based methods; (2) total IHS funding increased from approximately \$517 million in FY 1980 to about \$1 billion in FY 1990, and Oklahoma's funding increased from \$59.9 million to \$131 million during that period; (3) increased needs-based funding for Oklahoma failed to increase its overall funding share; (4) per-capita funding for Oklahoma Indians was relatively low due to limited needs-based funding and the growing number of eligible Indians in the area; and (5) IHS service delivery was strained in Oklahoma due to substantial increases in demand for outpatient services and rationing of the CHS program.

**Indian Programs: Tribal Influence in Formulating Budget Priorities Is Limited.** GAO/RCED-91-20. February 7, 1991.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) Indian Priority System (IPS) budget formulation process, focusing on the: (1) development and implementation of the IPS process; (2) level of tribal involvement and influence in setting IPS budget priorities; (3) extent to which tribes

contracted with BIA to carry out programs; and (4) concerns tribes had regarding the IPS process.

**FINDINGS:** GAO found that: (1) the BIA budget has averaged about \$1 billion annually over the past 10 years, with the operation of Indian programs budget component averaging about \$850 million a year and the IPS process averaging about \$275 million annually; (2) BIA changed various IPS programs based on administrative decisions or legislative directives without notifying area offices or tribes; (3) BIA could not explain why its current guidance provided tribes with a lesser role than earlier guidance in setting IPS budget priorities and funding levels; (4) tribal involvement in the IPS process varied depending on the tribes' relationship with BIA, changes in tribal leadership, and political situations at the tribes' reservations; (5) although tribes exercised some control over budget formulation for contracted programs, they characterized their overall IPS involvement as inconsequential; (6) tribes were particularly concerned about the lack of adequate federal funding for their needs; and (7) BIA and tribal officials often cited federal trust responsibilities as a factor limiting tribal involvement in the IPS process.

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