



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MAR 28 2002

OFFICE OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

John D. Graham, Ph.D.  
Administrator  
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs  
Office of Management and Budget  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Dr. Graham:

Thank you for your letter of March 4, 2002, providing your suggestions regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) information management practices, specifically those related to our management of data collections, facility information, and Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) data. I am happy to report that we have been actively working on projects in the areas you identified. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with specific information on our progress in these areas.

Our data collection efforts have been centralized in the Office of Environmental Information's (OEI), Office of Information Collection (OIC). OIC staff are actively and energetically implementing the Agency's new Central Data Exchange (CDX). When fully operational in 2003, CDX will be the centralized portal through which most environmental information is electronically submitted to EPA. CDX is being built to accommodate a variety of electronic data transmission protocols as well as paper, diskette, and other media reporting. This will be a contractor operated facility; the contract to build out the fully functional CDX is scheduled for award in April 2002. The contractor is required to transition the existing interim CDX system and have the fully functional CDX in place by December 31, 2002. By 2004 we expect CDX to be the point of receipt for all major EPA data collection efforts. Smaller data collection efforts will follow. Ultimately, our goal is to integrate CDX with central data registries such as the Facility Registry System (FRS) to achieve measurable burden reduction for those responsible for reporting data to EPA.

FRS serves as our first integrated media data registry, and is the means by which we intend to make a single facility identification number available. The FRS assigns each regulated entity a unique number, which will be available to the public and regulated reporting community this summer from our [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) web site. The system has been designed and implemented over the last three years, and now contains verified data on about 65% of the total of all EPA regulated entities. We expect over 1,200,000 unique records will be present in FRS when it is fully operational. Anyone with Internet access can make queries of the FRS and receive most of the environmental media data available in the Agency's Envirofacts warehouse.

Internet Address (URL) • <http://www.epa.gov>

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The Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) continues to be one of our most-used publicly available data resources. We recognize the importance of providing timely data to the public, and are working hard to improve its timeliness and value to our customers. EPA's TRI program is working closely with the CDX project team, to increase the volume of TRI Internet reporting, and for the 2001 TRI reporting year (reports due to EPA on July 1, 2002), every TRI submitter will have the option of providing their data via the Internet, using EPA's new TRI reporting software, "TRI-ME" ("TRI -- Made Easy"). TRI-ME has been designed with substantial compliance-assistance logic embedded in the reporting software. This should virtually eliminate significant errors and reduce the number of technical errors received by EPA, thus improving data quality and speeding-up the processing of the TRI data for public release. We are working to make Internet reporting the reporting method of choice for the majority of the TRI reporting community. We believe that Internet reporting coupled with facility owners' and operators' electronic signature will allow us to increase the speed with which we receive, process, quality-assure and release TRI data. We will be monitoring our progress in this area closely.

I appreciate this opportunity to share with you some of our initiatives which are aimed at streamlining data collection, and making more effective use of the information we collect to support EPA's programs. I hope this update is helpful in addressing your concerns.

Sincerely,



Kim T. Nelson  
Assistant Administrator and  
Chief Information Officer