



400 W. Summit Hill Drive, Knoxville, Tennessee 37902-1499

**June 14, 2006**

## **IMPROVING AGENCY DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION REPORT**

This report is issued in accordance with Executive Order 13,392

**A. *Characterize overall nature of agency's FOIA operations (degree of detail optional), with optional reference to areas preliminarily considered for agency review. (Agencies may also describe any particular FOIA challenges that they face.)***

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) has established a tradition of working in partnership with the people it serves through its business operations as a public power utility and as a regional provider for economic development and resource management services. TVA allocates time and resources to providing information to the public in the spirit of maintaining open channels of communication and avoiding unnecessary FOIA requests. As a result of more open information policies and increased emphasis on improving the administration of its FOIA program, the number of FOIA requests continues to decline and response times have improved.

**B. *List all areas selected for review***

A review was conducted for all areas of TVA's FOIA program, including but not limited to, the volume of requests received and processed, overall median response time, the status of any back-logged requests, use of an electronic tracking system and multi-track processing, staffing levels, communication methods available to requesters, the accuracy of information on TVA's FOIA website, and records available in the electronic Reading Room.

**C. *Include narrative statement summarizing results of review***

Our review revealed that TVA does not receive a large volume of FOIA requests in relation to its size and scope of operations. On average TVA receives and processes approximately 100 requests per year. Notable is the fact that the number of FOIA requests has declined by one-third since 1998. This is due primarily to the increased availability of TVA information from other sources such as the TVA website, public meetings on issues and projects, TVA Board

meetings, localized community relations activities, and other on-going educational and stakeholder relationship-building activities.

The median time for responding to all requests improved 61% from 1999 to 2004 and has been below 20 days since 2001. Currently, there is no back log of FOIA requests.

TVA uses an electronic tracking system to track FOIA requests and requesters, including but not limited to, the assignment of a unique tracking number to each request, calculation of the acknowledgement due date, tracking of exemptions used, and other information critical to TVA's FOIA Annual Report. TVA has used multi-track processing to respond to FOIA requests since 1998.

TVA takes a customer-friendly approach in handling inquiries from stakeholders. TVA has maintained a phone, fax number, and email address since 2000 that are used exclusively for FOIA inquiries. These communication contact points are answered in person during business hours. TVA dedicates an adequate level of funding to the FOIA program and has sufficient staff to respond to requests and inquiries in a timely manner.

TVA has a link to the FOIA website on the main page of the TVA website. In addition to information required by subsection (a)(2) of the FOIA to be made available on agency websites, the TVA FOIA website includes instructions on how to make a request, where to send it, how much it may cost to process, and how to appeal an initial determination. This information is related in commonly used terms and language to facilitate public understanding. TVA also maintains its frequently requested records in an electronic Reading Room on the FOIA website. A periodic review is conducted to identify any new information that may meet the requirements for publishing in the Reading Room.

**D. *List all areas chosen as improvement areas for agency plan***

TVA has consistently devoted management attention and resources to its FOIA program. Because TVA's administration of the FOIA is consistent with current guidance, meets or exceeds statutory response times, and is carried out in a customer-friendly manner, we have not identified any specific areas that need to be addressed for improvement or changes in the way FOIA requests are handled. Consequently, sections E. and F. of this report are omitted.

In accordance with Executive Order 13,392, and to further emphasize the importance of maintaining our performance in this area, TVA has designated a Chief FOIA Officer and a FOIA Public Liaison, and established a FOIA Requester Service Center on its FOIA website.