



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

Based on the interest of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, we initiated a project to research studies, articles, publications, and reports that address the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) organizational structure. This project is a collection of information, not an audit, and the information provided is strictly the viewpoint of the authors of the studies and not those of the Office of Inspector General (OIG).

Background

EPA was established in 1970 to merge key anti-pollution programs into an environmental protection administration as a new independent agency of the Executive Branch. EPA was initially intended to be organized around its major functions, such as research, monitoring, and enforcement. However, EPA was organized along media lines, such as air, land, and water. Consequently, some scholars and practitioners have called for major reform of the Agency's fragmented media program structure and environmental statutes.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Liaison at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2006/20060816-2006-P-00029.pdf

Studies Addressing EPA's Organizational Structure

What the Studies Found

The 13 studies, articles, publications, and reports we reviewed identified issues with cross-media management, regional offices, reliable information, and reliable science. We included reliable information and reliable science because some authors stated that changes to EPA's organizational structure were necessary to improve these areas.

- **Cross-Media Management.** Seven studies stated that EPA might be missing an opportunity to be more effective because EPA bases its organizational structure on disparate environmental laws that do not consider that problems with the various media are interrelated.
- **Regional Offices.** Two studies stated that EPA's regional offices do not adequately consider the geographic connectivity of environmental issues that cross EPA's identified regions. Thus, the regions may not adequately address their environmental problems.
- **Reliable Information.** Ten studies stated that EPA does not always have reliable data to support its positions on the state of the environment or to measure effectively the success of its programs in improving the environment.
- **Reliable Science.** Two studies stated that EPA does not always utilize reliable science to support its rules and regulations. Consequently, the authors believe that EPA may pass regulations that may not fully address environmental problems.

What the Studies Recommended

The authors of 9 of the 13 studies made the following recommendations:

- EPA should seek congressional assistance in drafting a single cross-media environmental statute, and should change its organizational structure to address environmental issues from a cross-media approach.
- EPA should develop a regional management system that addresses cross-media issues over the affected regions.
- Congress should form and fund an independent bureau of environmental information or statistics (an addition external to EPA) to assess the state of the environment and the success of EPA media programs.
- EPA should evaluate its current policies governing the use of science and consider the appointment of a science "czar" (an addition to the EPA organizational structure) to improve the credibility of its science.