Chapter 2. FILES MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

1. <u>General</u>. Each office in Reclamation is unique based on the Projects and Programs it manages and the records created to document those activities. Therefore, filing and file plans may vary from office to office. Variations in filing are acceptable as long they are consistent throughout a particular office.

    Two basic filing concepts are used throughout Reclamation, Central Files and File Stations or a combination of the two. Records should be located reasonably close to those who create and use them on a routine basis. All temporary records should be disposed of in accordance with the approved retention schedule. Office reference copies of permanently transferred Official Files may be retained in an office or electronic format if required for continuing operations but must be designated as REFERENCE ONLY.

    Information, records, and data retained in electronic form whose output equates to paper format must follow the approved retention schedules when the data is converted to a hard copy.

2. <u>Central Files</u>. Within Reclamation, central files typically houses Official File copies in a centralized location for several functions or program offices. The Central Files concept is used primarily in the Washington, Region and Area Offices where file custodians process, file, and maintain records they receive from all offices or units. In this concept the file custodians manage the records throughout their life-cycle, including the final disposition process.

    Records maintained in central files usually contain various types on all mediums, including drawings, photographs, correspondence, e-mail, etc., which are filed in both case and subject filing systems. In this concept, the records/file custodian must have an extensive knowledge of all program and functional records they receive and manage, and be familiar with the mission, programs, and projects for which the office has oversight responsibility.

    Files maintained in central files may consist of both active and inactive records. In addition to being filed by case or subject, they may also be filed, segregated, or arranged for a specific reason, such as those being held for litigation, a specific study, audit, or other requirement. The filing arrangement in central files typically uses all 15 major records series as defined in Volume II of this Handbook. These record series are then divided into subfolders for more detail.

3. <u>File Stations</u>. This is usually a physical location in a function or program office where records are maintained by the technical specialists who create and use them. A file station may have a file custodian who assists the technical or program staff that have responsibility for maintaining their records. Typically this file arrangement uses only 1 or 2 of the 15 major records series found in Volume II. These may be further sub-divided according to the function or program work done by the group or unit at the folder level.

Files for each of the 15 records series will not be created in every file station. Therefore, it is recommended that a File Plan be created for administrative and general subject files, including the mission related case files of that office or unit. This provides a detailed record for tracking and accountability purposes in both paper and electronic form. File Plans should also indicate activities or events that may affect daily use of the records such as audits, freeze/holds, or litigation. File Plans should be reviewed and revised annually.

The file station concept can be implemented in offices that administer only one specific program or function such as Acquisitions, Concrete Dams, or Water 2025. For instance, all files created in the acquisition office are filed within that office, essentially creating a 'central files' for just that function.

File stations may also be combined within a major function or program area where several distinct working groups report to one manager. Engineering functions such as electrical, mechanical, and architectural may each have their own manager and file station. These in turn report to a senior manager and file station above them. In this example, four distinct file stations may exist. The file station concept can also be equated to field offices that create records during a construction project.