Chapter 3.   SUBJECT FILES

1. <u>Purpose</u>. Provides a uniform system for organizing a highly important collection of files that can not be filed according to a specific identifier, such as a name or number. This arrangement is typically filed according to a common Subject or topic according to the information contained in the document. Most often these are referred to as "general files," and are used throughout Reclamation.

2. <u>Description</u>. Subject files are often known as <u>general files</u> and are arranged and filed according to their informational value or subject content. These files may contain originals or copies of letters and memorandums, but could also contain forms, reports, and other material relating to a program or administrative function which are not specific to any one topic.

3. <u>Subject Filing</u>. There are two methods used for filing these records. One is a segregated filing system arranged alphabetically by common topic or functional descriptor. The second is a general file at the beginning of each records series case file using classification code 1.10 which uses a standard set of topics as the descriptors. Both central files and file stations normally have separate subject files. As an example, a letter implementing new procedures for equipment leasing received from the General Services Administration would be filed in General Files using the classification code ACM -1.10. A letter from a specific company to the Chief of Acquisition regarding new lease rates on Reclamation copiers would NOT be filed in the general files, but in the company case file using PRM-18.00. Therefore, documents concerning a specific action, transaction, company, etc., are filed in the case file while those referring to activities or procedures in general are filed by general subject. Distinguishing between subject and case files is vital to good file management.

   A File Plan for General Subject filing is a necessity for each office, and especially those offices that administer Congressionally-mandated programs or cooperative work with other agencies and outside entities.

   File custodians, program functional specialists, and managers should all coordinate the implementation and periodic review of these File Plans. General or Subject files should be kept to a minimum because of their complexity.

   A general or subject filing system can be much more difficult to implement and maintain because of shifting priorities in programmatic, legislative, or administrative functions in relation to filing records of a construction nature. In addition, these files tend to be administrative files which document activities on a Reclamation-wide basis as opposed to more specific files on a particular program or project. It is recommended that a File Plan be created for these types of records.

   Another difficulty with general or subject filing is documents and materials created for reference or administrative purposes and received from other offices acting in a support role with the first office. This documentation is not the "official record" of the office maintaining it for reference. These materials must be reviewed on a frequent basis by the program

specialists for informational value to the current work. If these reference documents are no longer relative then they should be disposed of and only current documentation retained. This is particularly difficult because activities can be curtailed by budget or administrative priorities and then resumed months or even years later.

Do not use the "general" file simply because the document does not have an adequate descriptor in the subject line when it should be filed in the project or program case files. If necessary read the entire document, contact the author or subject matter specialists for clarification. The use of a "general" file should be limited because these files normally have a temporary retention and should be disposed of in a relatively short period of time.

It is important to understand the content, informational value, and length of time needed to retain these documents. If the document contains general information of significant importance to Reclamation, it should be filed in a program or project case file regarding that subject which has a long term or permanent retention.

4. <u>Arrangement</u>. The Subject Files consist of selected primary subject titles with related subjects grouped in outline form as subdivisions of the primary subject titles. These subdivisions are secondary level and tertiary (third level) subjects. <u>A folder title is mandatory when entering folders into the REDS-Records system</u>.

    Example:

Administrative	Primary Subject (ADM)
Audit	Secondary Subject (8.00)
General Accounting Office	Tertiary Subject (folder title)
Environmental	Primary Subject (ENV)
Cultural Resources Management	Secondary Subject (3.00)
Archaeological Permits	Tertiary Subject (folder title)

The Primary Subject represents the scope of work done in a particular office, for instance Environmental - ENV is the Primary Subject. ENV- 3.00 - Cultural Resources is the Secondary, and Archaeological Permits is the Tertiary in the example used above. The Secondary Subject more narrowly defines the type of activity and the Tertiary Subject notes the specific topic which becomes the folder title.

Do not create general or subject Primary files for every topic. Likewise it is not necessary to further subdivide the Primary general file unless there are specific subjects that require in depth coverage or have sufficient filing needs to warrant the creation of additional folders.

Folders for topics with limited record creation, e.g. one to five sheets of paper per year, are not necessary and can be filed in the main folder. Likewise, folders that become full within three to six months should be reviewed and subdivided alphabetically by subject such as geographic location or name of activity like Recreation, and then by topic, e.g. boating, fishing, trail maintenance, camping permits, etc.