



**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Office of Inspector General**

# **SURVEY REPORT**

**SELECTED ACTIVITIES OF THE  
UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER SYSTEM  
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM,  
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY**

**REPORT NO. 98-I-580  
JULY 1998**



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
Washington, D.C. 20240

JUL 27 1998

## SURVEY REPORT

### Memorandum

To: Director, U.S. Geological Survey

From: Robert J. Williams *Robert J. Williams*  
Assistant Inspector General for Audits

Subject: Survey Report on Selected Activities of the Upper Mississippi River System  
Environmental Management Program, U.S. Geological Survey (No. 98-I-580)

## INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of our survey of selected activities conducted by the Environmental Management Technical Center, U.S. Geological Survey, under an agreement between the Department of the Interior and the Department of the Army to implement the Upper Mississippi River System Environmental Management Program. The survey was requested by the Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division, Department of the Army. The objective of the survey was to determine whether (1) cooperative agreements with the various states and universities involved in the Environmental Management Program were appropriate and adequate; (2) funds provided by the Corps were used for their intended purpose, within the time frame specified, and in the amounts authorized; (3) property was properly accounted for in accordance with applicable regulations; (4) reported Program costs, including overhead, were accurately supported by the accounting system; and (5) contracts were awarded and administered in accordance with applicable regulations.

## BACKGROUND

The Upper Mississippi River Management Act of 1986 (Section 1103 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986) was enacted to ensure the coordinated development and enhancement of the Upper Mississippi River System. The Act authorized the Secretary of the Army, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior and the states of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin, to undertake three programs to (1) plan, construct, and evaluate measures for fish and wildlife habitat rehabilitation and enhancement; (2) implement a long-term resource monitoring program; and (3) implement a computerized

inventory and analysis system. Each of these three programs was to be carried out for 10 years, which was subsequently extended to 15 years by Section 107 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1992. Responsibility for the second and third programs was assigned to the Department of the Interior under a memorandum of agreement with the Department of the Army executed in 1987. However, the memorandum of agreement stated that the Department of the Army "will retain ultimate responsibility and report to OMB [Office of Management and Budget] and Congress on program implementation and for funding needs for the programs (as well as for all UMRS-EMP [Upper Mississippi River System - Environmental Management Program] activities) in annual budget presentations."

The Department of the Interior assigned responsibility for the long-term resource monitoring and the computerized inventory programs to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In 1988, the Service entered into a memorandum of agreement with the five states to delineate roles and responsibilities for accomplishing the programs. In addition, the Service entered into individual cooperative agreements between 1988 and 1990, with each of the five states to assign specific work tasks and to establish a mechanism for providing funds to the states. Further, the Service entered into cooperative agreements with six colleges/universities to provide staff and technical expertise to the Center to accomplish the objectives of the long-term resource monitoring program and the computerized inventory and analysis system.

As a result of various Departmental reorganizations, overall program responsibility was transferred from the Service to the National Biological Survey, which was established by Secretarial Order No. 3173, dated September 29, 1993. Secretarial Order No. 3185, dated January 5, 1995, changed the name of the National Biological Survey to the National Biological Service. By Secretarial Order No. 3202, dated September 30, 1996, the National Biological Service was transferred to the U.S. Geological Survey and was named the Biological Resources Division, effective October 1, 1996. Notwithstanding the Departmental reorganizations, program direction and oversight have remained the responsibility, since the Program's inception, of the Environmental Management Technical Center, located in Onalaska, Wisconsin, which is now part of the Biological Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey.

For fiscal years 1995 through 1997, the Corps made available about \$17.5 million for expenditure by the Center for the long-term resource monitoring and the computerized inventory programs (see Appendix 1). The Center receives payments from the Corps based upon periodic billings for expenditures. As of September 30, 1997, the Center had obligated about \$17.2 million of the available funding, leaving an unobligated balance of about \$300,000. Of the \$17.2 million obligated by the Center, about \$8.2 million was for Center salaries, overhead, and other operating costs, and about \$9 million was obligated under cooperative agreements with the five participating states and six colleges/universities.

## **SCOPE OF SURVEY**

The survey was performed during November 1997 through February 1998 at the Environmental Management Technical Center and the Bureau of Reclamation's Denver Administrative Service Center, the latter of which performed the payment function for the

Program during fiscal years 1996 and 1997. To accomplish the stated audit objective, we interviewed Center and other U.S. Geological Survey personnel; examined cooperative agreements; reviewed the Center's procedures, controls, and accounting records related to the programs; and reviewed available single audit reports for the states and colleges/universities that entered into cooperative agreements with the Center. Our survey covered costs incurred and program activities that occurred for fiscal years 1995 through 1997. Our survey was performed without the benefit of a technical evaluation. Accordingly, our conclusions are qualified to the extent that a technical evaluation may affect the allocability and allowability of reported costs.

Our survey was conducted in accordance with the "Government Auditing Standards," issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Accordingly, we included such tests of records and other auditing procedures that were considered necessary under the circumstances. As part of our review, we assessed the Center's system of administrative and accounting controls applicable to the selected Program activities we reviewed and found weaknesses related to (1) defining work tasks to be performed under cooperative agreements with colleges/universities, (2) monitoring state and college/university financial activities under cooperative agreements, and (3) maintaining an accurate inventory of equipment owned by the Federal Government and conducting physical inventories. These weaknesses are addressed in the Results of Survey section of this report. Our recommendations, if implemented, should improve the internal controls in these areas.

We also reviewed the Department's Accountability Report for fiscal year 1996, which includes information required by the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act of 1982, and the U.S. Geological Survey's assurance statement for fiscal year 1997 to determine whether any reported weaknesses were within the objective and scope of our review. While the Secretary's assurance statement identified two reportable conditions from audited financial statements related to Federal-state cooperative projects and property accountability and reporting, we found that these conditions did not apply to the Center's operations.

## **PRIOR AUDIT COVERAGE**

Neither the Office of Inspector General nor the General Accounting Office has issued an audit report during the past 5 years on the Center's operations. However, we identified 11 reports on audits of state and college/university cooperators that were conducted under the Single Audit Act of 1984 (Appendix 2). As stated in the Results of Survey section of this report, we found that one of these reports identified deficiencies in the areas of cash advances, monitoring subgrantee costs, financial reporting, property record adequacy, and the timeliness of agreement expenditures. All of these deficiencies related directly to cooperative agreements entered into with the Center. These deficiencies were considered in executing our audit survey.

## **RESULTS OF SURVEY**

We found, for the funds expended by the Environmental Management Technical Center for its activities conducted under the Environmental Management Program, that (1) funds provided by the Corps were used for their intended purpose, within the time frame specified, and in the amounts authorized; (2) reported Program expenditures, including overhead, were accurately supported by the accounting system; and (3) acquisitions were awarded and administered in accordance with applicable regulations. However, we found that cooperative agreements with the various states and universities involved in the Program were not adequate and that property was not properly accounted for in accordance with applicable regulations. This occurred because the Center had not adequately defined specific tasks to be performed in amendments to cooperative agreements with colleges/universities, adequately monitored Program funds expended by the cooperators, properly accounted for equipment acquired with Program funds, or performed annual physical inventories of Government equipment in the possession of state cooperators since 1994. As a result, for the funds expended by the cooperators, the specific tasks to be accomplished with Program funds of over \$1.1 million were not defined, and the costs incurred by cooperators were not adequately monitored. In addition, the Center did not have a current and accurate inventory of Federally owned equipment. Further, we identified about \$2 million that the Center obligated for work to be performed in fiscal years subsequent to the fiscal years in which the funds were made available by the Corps.

### **Cooperative Agreement Amendments**

The Environmental Management Technical Center, when amending cooperative agreements with colleges/universities, did not always specify the tasks, including deliverables, to be performed with Program funds for the long-term resource monitoring program and the computerized inventory and analysis system. This occurred primarily when amendments were executed near fiscal year-end that included additional work on the Environmental Management Program and other Center projects. In addition to the Corps Program funding, the Center received funding for other Center projects from sources such as other Corps of Engineer districts, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Biological Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey. However, the Center performed work on some of the other projects through the cooperative agreements it executed for Program work. Center personnel told us that tasks were not defined at the time the amendments were executed because Center management wanted some flexibility when the tasks to be performed were identified and because they needed to obligate available funds (from all sources) by fiscal year-end. As a result, Program funds of about \$1.1 million were obligated under 15 cooperative agreement amendments with colleges/universities under the Program during fiscal years 1995 through 1997 without the Program work that was to be performed being defined. For example:

- A September 1996 cooperative agreement amendment with a college provided fiscal year 1996 funding totaling about \$380,000 in support of nine individual projects, including one Program-specific project. The amendment provided funds for the college to "continue to provide student, faculty, and staff support to assist the NBS' [National Biological

Service's] Environmental Management Technical Center in its efforts relative to the Upper Mississippi River Systems Environmental Management Program."

- A September 1996 cooperative agreement amendment with a university provided fiscal year 1996 funding totaling about \$332,000 in support of 10 individual projects, including 1 Program-specific project. The amendment provided funds for the university to "continue to provide student, faculty, and research associate support to assist the NBS' [National Biological Service's] Environmental Management Technical Center in its efforts relative to the Upper Mississippi River Systems Environmental Management Program."

Because the Center did not identify the amount of funds provided for specific projects or the specific Program work to be performed in the amendments to the cooperative agreements, it did not have full assurance that cooperators would use the funds for intended Program purposes.

### **Monitoring Program Costs**

The Center's process for monitoring costs incurred by cooperators needs to be improved. Specifically, the Center did not obtain or review single audit reports of the cooperators' financial activities to aid in determining whether the cooperators complied with the Program's financial requirements. The Single Audit Act of 1984, as amended, requires recipients who receive Federal assistance of more than \$300,000 in any given year to complete an organizationwide audit that includes a separate review of Federal funds. However, Center officials stated that they did not foresee a need to review single audit reports because they were aware of how the states and colleges/universities expended Program funds through the annual budget process and through reviews of standard financial reports submitted by the cooperators. In addition, they stated that their knowledge of the activities performed by state personnel based at the Program's field stations and the college/university employees physically located at the Center provided assurance that Program funds were used properly. However, we found that the reports submitted by the cooperators to obtain Program funds and to report on Program expenditures and fund status provided only cumulative expenditures without any details on how the funds were used. In addition, we found one single audit report that contained several Program financial deficiencies, as discussed in the following paragraphs, of which the Center was not aware.

For fiscal years 1995 and 1996, we reviewed 11 single audit reports that covered the activities of the state and college/university cooperators. For 10 of these reports, matters of noncompliance with internal controls or Federal requirements or questioned costs were not identified to any Department of the Interior programs. However, the single audit report for fiscal year 1996 for one cooperator identified deficiencies related to the Environmental Management Program as follows:

- Cash advances in excess of immediate needs were requested by the cooperator in April 1995 and advanced by the Center in June 1995; however, the funds were not fully disbursed by the cooperator until April 1996.

- The cooperator did not monitor all of its Federal programs and therefore had no assurance that all Federal program requirements were met.

- Required financial status reports submitted by the cooperator to the Center for fiscal year 1996 were incorrect. Specifically, certain indirect costs were excluded from the reports, costs incurred under a jointly funded agreement involving the cooperator were excluded from the reports, and expenditures were reported on the cash rather than the accrual basis.

- The cooperator's property and equipment records were not adequate. However, additional audit work performed enabled the auditors to satisfy themselves that the reporting of property and equipment was acceptable.

- The cooperator was reimbursed by the Center for costs of \$117,730 that were incurred after an amendment to the cooperative agreement expired. (We found that subsequent to the single audit, the cooperative agreement amendment was extended by the Center to bring the disputed costs within the period covered by the amendment.)

Center officials told us that they did not consider these deficiencies to be significant. However, they stated that information contained in single audit reports could be beneficial to their overall monitoring of cooperator activities.

## **Equipment**

We found that the Center had not properly accounted for equipment purchased with Federal funds in accordance with applicable regulations. Specifically, the Center had not updated its inventory of equipment to delete state-owned equipment or conducted annual inventories of equipment purchased with Federal funds that was located at the field stations operated by the five cooperating states. As of January 21, 1998, the value of all equipment<sup>1</sup> as reported in the Center's property system was about \$4 million, which consisted of capitalized equipment of \$2.3 million and noncapitalized equipment of \$1.7 million. The original cooperative agreements with the five states stated that all equipment acquired with Program funds would be the property of the Federal Government. However, the Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR 12.72), as amended on March 11, 1988, states that title to equipment purchased by states with Federal funds vests with the states and that the equipment will be used, managed, and disposed of in accordance with state laws and procedures. The Center recently recognized the change in the regulations and entered into new cooperative agreements with Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin effective October 1, 1997, to incorporate the requirements of the Code (43 CFR 12.72). In addition, at the time of our review, the Center was executing new cooperative agreements with Minnesota and Missouri.

The Interior Property Management Regulations (114-60.301) require that complete physical inventories be conducted at least annually of all capitalized and noncapitalized nonexpendable equipment. However, the Center had not conducted a physical inventory of

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<sup>1</sup>The Center's equipment data base includes all equipment assigned to the Center, not just equipment purchased with Program funds. The data base does not identify what funds were used to acquire the equipment.

equipment at the field stations since 1994. The Center's equipment data base includes equipment that was acquired by the Federal Government and the states with Program funds. The Center's data base did not identify which equipment was owned by the states and therefore should be deleted from the data base. To establish ownership of the equipment, the Center stated that it would have to conduct a physical inventory at all of the Program's locations and then determine whether the equipment was acquired by the Federal Government or the states. Center management stated that while they intended to conduct physical inventories and to delete state-owned equipment from the equipment data base, other priorities, such as converting to the U.S. Geological Survey property system, had taken precedence. As a result, the Center's inventory of equipment did not accurately reflect the value or the quantity of property that is owned by the Federal Government.

## Timely Use of Funds

Annual funding for the long-term resource monitoring program and the computerized inventory and analysis system made available by the Corps was not always used by the Center for services to be performed in the same fiscal year in which the funds were made available. Corps Program staff told us that it was the Corps intention for the services to be provided in the year that the funds were made available. However, the Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request documents that made the funding available to the Center stated that the services to be performed pursuant to the order were properly chargeable until December 31 of the year to which the request applied. Center officials said that they interpreted the provision to mean that the Center had until December 31, or 3 months after the September 30 closure of its fiscal year, to obligate the funds.

We believe that the interpretation made by Center officials is reasonable because the source of the funds made available by the Corps was a no-year appropriation. However, based on the comments of Corps staff regarding the timeliness of the Center's use of the funds, we determined that the Center obligated funds of \$1,957,235 for services to be performed after the fiscal year in which the funds were made available as follows:

<u>Funding Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Obligations for Subsequent Fiscal Year Services *</u>
1995	\$213,576
1996	645,560
1997	1,098,099
Total	<u>\$1,957,235</u>

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\*These obligations for subsequent fiscal year services all occurred from October 1 through December 31 of the funding fiscal year.



Because we believe that the Center was in compliance with the requirements of the purchase requests, we did not make any recommendations regarding the timely use of funds. In addition, Corps officials told us that the situation had been corrected in its fiscal year 1998 funding document, which stated that funds were properly chargeable until September 30.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that the Director, U.S. Geological Survey, require the Director, Environmental Management Technical Center, to:

1. Ensure that amendments to cooperative agreements are sufficiently detailed to identify Program tasks to be performed, products to be delivered, and the funding for each specific task.
2. Obtain copies of single audit reports from the cooperators on an as-issued basis for all of the Program's cooperators. The Center should review these reports and follow up with the cooperators to resolve reported deficiencies that have an impact on the Program.
3. Conduct a physical inventory of the equipment located at all of the Center's field locations to determine which equipment was acquired by and is owned by the Federal Government and which equipment is owned by the states and delete from the Center's equipment data base those items that are owned by the states. Also, assurance should be provided that physical inventories of all Federal Government capitalized and noncapitalized (nonexpendable) equipment are performed at least annually.

## **U.S. Geological Survey Response and Office of Inspector General Reply**

In the June 10, 1998, response (Appendix 3) to the draft report from the Associate Director, U.S. Geological Survey, the Geological Survey agreed with the three recommendations. Based on the response, we consider Recommendations 1 and 2 resolved and implemented and Recommendation 3 resolved but not implemented. Accordingly, Recommendation 3 will be referred to the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget for tracking of implementation.

## **Additional Comments on Survey Report**

Regarding equipment inventories, the Geological Survey stated that the Center had "conducted an inventory of controlled and sensitive personal property in November 1996 and July 1997. The inventory was completed on-site and via telecommunications. Necessary additions and deletions, and corrections were made."

While we are aware of the physical inventories of controlled/sensitive property at the Center, the inventories via telecommunications of the field stations were not in compliance with requirements of the Interior Property Management Regulations (114-60.301) that state that "a complete physical inventory" of capitalized and noncapitalized personal property should be conducted on an annual basis. In that regard the Geological Survey stated that the

"Center is in the process of conducting another physical inventory of equipment located at all Center field locations to verify which equipment was acquired by and is owned by the Federal Government."

Since the report's recommendations are considered resolved, no further response to the Office of Inspector General is required (see Appendix 4).

The legislation, as amended, creating the Office of Inspector General requires semiannual reporting to the Congress on all audit reports issued, actions taken to implement audit recommendations, and identification of each significant recommendation on which corrective action has not been taken.

**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL CENTER'S  
LONG-TERM RESOURCE MONITORING PROGRAM AND  
COMPUTERIZED INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS SYSTEM -  
SUMMARY OF FUNDS PROVIDED AND OBLIGATED  
AT SEPTEMBER 30, 1997**

	Fiscal Year			Total
	1995	1996	1997	
Funds Provided by the Department of the Army	\$5,705,500	\$5,975,343	\$5,825,000	\$17,505,843
Funds Obligated by the Department of the Interior:				
Direct Expenditures	\$2,249,105	\$2,279,532	\$2,217,839	\$6,746,476
Overhead	563,012	496,293	425,237	1,484,542
Subtotal	\$2,812,117	\$2,775,825	\$2,643,076	\$8,231,018
Cooperative Agreements	2,713,648	3,087,266	3,181,924	8,982,838
Total Obligations	\$5,525,765	\$5,863,091	\$5,825,000	\$17,213,856
Unobligated Balance*	\$179,735	\$112,252	\$0	\$291,987

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\* The unobligated balance is the difference between the amount of funds provided by the Department of the Army and the total amount of funds obligated by the Department of the Interior.

**SINGLE AUDIT REPORTS OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL CENTER -  
STATE AND COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY COOPERATORS  
THAT WERE LOCATED AND REVIEWED**

Audited Entity	Audit Periods (Fiscal Years)
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	1996
State of Iowa	1996
State of Minnesota	1995 and 1996
State of Missouri	1996
State of Wisconsin	1995 and 1996
State of Tennessee	1995 and 1996
University of Illinois	1996
University of Wisconsin System	1995



# United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
Office of the Director  
Reston, Virginia 20192

In Reply Refer To:  
Mail Stop 300  
#10760

## MEMORANDUM

JUN 10 1998

To: Acting Inspector General

From: Barbara J. Ryan *Barbara J. Ryan*  
Associate Director, U.S. Geological Survey

Subject: Draft Survey Report on Selected Activities of the Upper Mississippi River System  
Environmental Management Program, U.S. Geological Survey (Assignment  
No. C-IN-GSV-001-98-R)

This is in response to your April 24, 1998, memorandum regarding the three recommendations included in the above-referenced report.

**1. OIG Finding:** The Environmental Management Technical Center (EMTC), when amending cooperative agreements with colleges/universities, did not always specify the tasks, including deliverables, to be performed with Program funds for the long-term resource monitoring program (LTRMP) and the computerized inventory and analysis system. This occurred primarily when amendments were executed near fiscal year-end that included additional work on the Environmental Management Program and other center projects.

**OIG Recommendation:** Ensure that amendments to cooperative agreements are sufficiently detailed to identify Program tasks to be performed, products to be delivered, and the funding for each specific task.

**Response: Partially Concur.** The EMTC has had a cooperative relationship with colleges and universities dating back to the beginning of the LTRMP. These agreements were established to support LTRMP activities. The initial agreements detailed the roles and responsibilities of the EMTC and the cooperating college or university. Subsequent amendments to these agreements did not always detail specific tasks but required continued support of the LTRMP (as identified in the original Cooperative Agreement). Because we work with our cooperators on a daily/weekly basis, we easily monitored performance and were very comfortable that work was being accomplished in accordance with our Annual Work Plans. However, we recognize that

including the specifics of cooperative agreement work only in the Annual Work Plan has caused some confusion.

**Corrective Action Planned:** In the future, all amendments to cooperative agreements with colleges and universities will contain more detail, including deliverables, to be performed with Program funds in support of the LTRMP.

**2. OIG Finding:** The Center's process for monitoring costs incurred by cooperators needs to be improved.

**OIG Recommendation:** Obtain copies of single audit reports from the cooperators on an as-issued basis for all of the Program's cooperators. The Center should review these reports and follow up with the cooperators to resolve reported deficiencies that have an impact on the Program.

**Response:** Concur.

**Corrective Action Planned:** The Center will obtain copies of single-audit reports from the cooperators on an as-issued basis and will review them and follow up with the cooperators to resolve reported deficiencies that have an impact on the Program.

**3. OIG Finding:** We found that the Center had not properly accounted for equipment purchased with Federal funds in accordance with applicable regulations. Specifically, the Center had not updated its inventory of equipment to delete State-owned equipment or conducted annual inventories of equipment purchased with Federal funds and was located at the field stations operated by the five cooperating States.

**OIG Recommendation:** Conduct a physical inventory of the equipment located at all of the Center's field locations to determine which equipment was acquired by and is owned by the Federal Government and which equipment is owned by the States and delete from the Center's equipment database those items that are owned by the States. Also, assurance should be provided that physical inventories of all Federal Government capitalized and noncapitalized (nonexpendable) equipment are performed at least annually.

**Response: Partially Concur.** The Center believes that they were conforming to the intent of applicable regulations. The Center conducted an inventory of controlled and sensitive personal property in November 1996 and July 1997. The inventory was completed on-site and via telecommunications. Necessary additions, deletions, and corrections were identified.

OMB Circular A-102, Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, was revised after our cooperative agreements were in place. This resulted in minor changes in the administration of the agreements regarding ownership and accountability of equipment and supplies purchased by State field stations. In addition, there was

confusion in property ownership resulting from Corps of Engineers ownership claims which predated the revised circular. This issue has been clarified recently.

**Corrective Action Taken:** All cooperative agreements have been revised to comply with Circular A-102.

**Corrective Action Planned:** The Center is in the process of conducting another physical inventory of equipment located at all Center field locations to verify which equipment was acquired by and is owned by the Federal Government and which equipment is State-owned. During this review, we will remove U.S. Government identification stickers from effected equipment, review records of equipment purchased by the field station, and inventory remaining Federal equipment. We will also ensure that inventories of all Federal Government capitalized and non-capitalized (non-expendable) equipment are performed at least annually.

**Targeted Completion Date:** September 30, 1998.

Please contact Norman Hildrum or Linda Ott on 608-783-7550 or Jo Margaret Hale on 703-648-4089, if you have any questions regarding this response.

## STATUS OF AUDIT REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding/ Recommendation Reference	Status	Action Required
1 and 2	Implemented.	No further action is required.
3	Resolved; not implemented.	No further response to the Office of Inspector General is required. The recommendation will be referred to the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget for tracking of implementation.



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SHOULD BE REPORTED TO  
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