Workforce Trends in Selected Natural Resource Agencies

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Renewable Natural Resources Foundation’s Conference on Personnel Trends, Education Policy, and Evolving Roles of Federal and State Natural Resources Agencies

Washington, DC; October 28, 2003
Outline of Presentation

• Federal departments and agencies reviewed

• Highlights of workforce trends in three natural resource agencies

• Workforce trends reviewed
  ✓ Employment
  ✓ Aging
  ✓ Separations and accessions
  ✓ Losses of scientists and experienced managers
  ✓ Critical skill/competency needs
  ✓ Workforce diversity

• Concluding comments
Federal Departments and Agencies Reviewed

• Governmentwide trends
• Department of the Interior
• U.S. Forest Service (FS)
• Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Governmentwide Employment Trends
(Fiscal Years 1997 – 2002)

Source: www.fedscope.opm.gov/index.htm
Aging of the Workforce

- Over 40 percent of government employees are over the age of 50, about 23 percent have more than 25 years of service. Only about 6 percent are under the age of 30.

- Natural resource agencies’ workforce age is generally consistent with governmentwide averages; length of service is slightly higher.

- About 24 percent of the civilian labor force is over the age of 50 and about 38 percent is under the age of 30.

Source: www.fedscope.opm.gov/index.htm (Only permanent full-time employees included.)
Separation and Accession Trends

- Over the past 5 years, federal governmentwide:
  - Separation rates averaged 7.2 percent annually
  - Accession rates averaged 6.4 percent annually

- Separation and accession rates for natural resource agencies have been at or below governmentwide rates.

Source: [www.fedscope.opm.gov/index.htm](http://www.fedscope.opm.gov/index.htm) (Only permanent full-time employees included)
Losses of Experienced Managers & Scientists

Governmentwide Trends

Percent of governmentwide senior managers employed on October 1, 2000, estimated to leave service by October 2007:

- Over 50 percent of career SES members
- About 46 percent of GS-15s
- About 34 percent of GS-14s

Source: Senior Executive Service: Enhanced Agency Efforts Needed to Improve Diversity as the Senior Corps Turns Over, GAO-03-34, January 17, 2003
Losses of Experienced Managers & Scientists
Department of the Interior

- Over 50 percent of Interior’s SES members will have left service by October 1, 2007.

- Above-average retirement and attrition rates for scientists and specialists in certain key occupations

Sources: GAO-03-34 and DOI’s Strategic Human Capital Management Plan, FY 2003-2007
Within the next 5 years,

- 50 percent or more of the leadership team in key areas will become eligible to retire.
- Above-average retirement and attrition projections for scientists and specialists in certain key occupations.

Sources: GAO-03-34; Forest Service Workforce Plan -- Addendum, 2002-2006; and Forest Service Strategy for Improving Organizational Efficiency, 2003-2007
Within the next 5 years,

- About 52 percent of SES members will have left service by October 1, 2007.

- A significant portion of EPA’s scientists and technical staff will become eligible to retire by 2008.

Source: GAO-03-34 and Major Management Challenges and Program Risks: Environmental Protection Agency, GAO-03-112, January 2003
Critical Skill/Competency Needs

Department of the Interior

Technical skill gaps include:

• Law enforcement and security
• Information technology
• Fire management
• Natural and physical science
• Financial management
• Facilities management and engineering
• Contract management
• Mediation and negotiation
• Strategic business planning

Sources: GAO-03-34 and DOI’s Strategic Human Capital Management Plan, FY 2003-2007
Critical Skill/Competency Needs

Forest Service

Competency needs include:

- Information technology
- Engineering and resource management
- Contract management
- Math/computer modeling
- GIS skills
- Law enforcement
- Criminal investigators
Critical Skill/Competency Needs

Environmental Protection Agency

EPA still must determine:

• the number of employees needed;

• the technical skills required;

• effective allocation of employees among goals and locations; and

• workforce development, as it loses leadership, institutional knowledge, and scientific expertise.

Workforce Diversity

Governmentwide Trends

From 1990 through 2000,

- The ratio of women to men increased from 43:57 to 45:55.

- Minorities increased from 27 to 30 percent, with all major ethnicities showing increases in federal employment.

Source: Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics: Demographic Profile of the Federal Workforce
Workforce Diversity

Department of the Interior

According to Interior, it needs to do a better job of attracting, hiring, developing, and retaining a diverse workforce. As of September 30, 2000:

- The ratio of women to men was 40:60—below governmentwide level.
- 27 percent were minorities—below governmentwide level.
- Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islanders populations fell short of governmentwide levels.
- Employment of American Indians was above governmentwide level.

Source: Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics: Demographic Profile of the Federal Workforce
According to the Forest Service, the agency has made limited progress toward meeting diversity goals. As of September 30, 2000:

- The ratio of women to men was 38:62—below governmentwide level.
- 15 percent were minorities—below governmentwide level.
  - Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islanders populations fell short of governmentwide levels.
  - Employment of American Indians was above governmentwide level.

Source: Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics: Demographic Profile of the Federal Workforce
Workforce Diversity

Environmental Protection Agency

As of September 30, 2000:

- The ratio of women to men was 49:51—better than governmentwide level.

- 29 percent were minorities—slightly below governmentwide level.
  - Black and Asian/Pacific Islanders populations were consistent with governmentwide level.
  - Hispanic and American Indian populations were below governmentwide level.

Source: Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics: Demographic Profile of the Federal Workforce
Concluding Comments

- Like the federal government as a whole, natural resource agencies face challenges dealing with an aging workforce.

- These agencies face losses of experienced managers and key technical staff, in many cases above the governmentwide average.

- Interior and Forest Service have identified their future skill gaps and critical needs, while EPA has not yet done so.

- Each agency must take steps to meet diversity goals.
Strategic Human Capital Management

GAO’s model for strategic human capital management provides a framework for addressing human capital challenges facing the federal government:

• Leadership, continuity, and succession planning
• Strategic human capital planning and organizational alignment
• Acquiring and developing a workforce whose size, skills, and deployment meet agency needs
• Creating results-oriented organizational cultures

Source: A Model of Strategic Human Capital Management, GAO-02-373SP, March 2002
Human Capital Challenges in an Increasingly Difficult Fiscal Environment

The human capital challenges that natural resource agencies face must be addressed in the context of a dismal fiscal picture:

- The Government faces an accumulated deficit of approximately $7 trillion.

- CBO estimates that, excluding Social Security surpluses, the total deficit for fiscal years 2003 and 2004 will be $562 billion and $644 billion, respectively.

- Discretionary spending has decreased substantially over the last several decades, and this trend is projected to continue.
Composition of Spending as a Share of GDP
Assuming Discretionary Spending Grows with GDP after 2003 and All Expiring Tax Provisions Are Extended

Notes: Although all expiring tax cuts are extended, revenue as a share of GDP increases through 2013 due to (1) real bracket creep, (2) more taxpayers becoming subject to the AMT, and (3) increased revenue from tax-deferred retirement accounts. After 2013, revenue as a share of GDP is held constant. This simulation assumes that currently scheduled Social Security benefits are paid in full throughout the simulation period.

Source: GAO’s August 2003 analysis.