



Highlights of [GAO-12-149T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Energy and Commerce, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) faces a number of management and budgetary challenges, which are particularly important as Congress seeks to decrease the cost of government while improving its performance. EPA operates in a highly complex and controversial regulatory arena, and its policies and programs affect virtually all segments of the economy, society, and government. From fiscal years 2000 through 2010, the agency's budget rose in nominal terms from \$7.8 billion to \$10.4 billion, but has remained relatively flat over this period in real terms.

This testimony highlights some of the major management challenges and budgetary issues facing a range of EPA programs and activities today.

This testimony focuses on (1) management of EPA's workload, workforce, and real property; (2) coordination with other agencies to more effectively leverage limited resources; and (3) observations on the agency's budget justifications. This testimony is based on prior GAO products and analysis.

What GAO Recommends

The work cited in this testimony made a number of recommendations intended to address management and related budget challenges, including improving the agency's workforce and workload planning, as well as its coordination with other federal agencies. EPA generally agreed with these recommendations.

View [GAO-12-149T](#). For more information, contact David Trimble at (202) 512-3841 or trimbled@gao.gov.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Management Challenges and Budget Observations

What GAO Found

Recent GAO work has identified challenges with EPA's efforts to manage its workload, workforce, and real property and made recommendations to address these challenges. In 2010, GAO reported that EPA had not comprehensively analyzed its workload and workforce since the late 1980s to determine the optimal numbers and distribution of staff agencywide. GAO recommended, among other things, that EPA link its workforce to its strategic plan and establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate their workforce planning efforts. A 2011 review of EPA's efforts to control contamination at hazardous waste sites found that the program was making progress toward its goals but that EPA had not performed a rigorous analysis of its remaining workload to help inform budget estimates and requests in line with program needs. Regarding real property management—an area that GAO has identified as part of its high-risk series—GAO reported that EPA operated a laboratory enterprise consisting of 37 laboratories housed in 170 buildings and facilities in 30 cities. GAO found that EPA did not have accurate and reliable information on its laboratories to respond to a presidential memorandum directing agencies to accelerate efforts to identify and eliminate excess properties. The report recommended that EPA address management challenges, real property planning decisions, and workforce planning.

GAO has reported on opportunities for EPA to better coordinate with other federal and state agencies to help implement its programs. Given the federal deficit and the government's long-term fiscal challenges, it is important that EPA improve its coordination with these agencies to make efficient use of federal resources. In a September 2011 report on the Chesapeake Bay, GAO found that federal and state agencies were not working toward the same strategic goals and recommended that EPA establish a working group or formal mechanism to develop common goals and clarify plans for assessing progress. In a 2009 report on rural water infrastructure, GAO reported that EPA and six other federal agencies had funded water and wastewater projects in the U.S.-Mexico border region. GAO suggested that Congress consider establishing an interagency task force to develop a plan for coordinating this funding. These findings were included in GAO's March 2011 report to Congress in response to a statutory requirement for GAO to identify federal programs with duplicative goals or activities.

Periodic GAO reviews of EPA's budget justifications have led to two recurring observations. First, with respect to proposals for new or expanded funding that GAO has examined, EPA has not consistently provided clear justification for the amount of funding requested or information on the management controls that the agency would use to ensure the efficient and effective use of requested funding. Second, GAO's reviews have found that EPA's budget justification documents do not provide information on funds from appropriations in prior years that were not expended and are available for new obligations. Such information could be useful to Congress because these funds could partially offset the need for new funding.