

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-722T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Superfund, Waste Management, and Regulatory Oversight, Committee on Environment and Public Works, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

EPA's mission is to protect human health and the environment. To accomplish this mission, EPA develops and enforces environmental regulations; awards grants; and studies environmental issues, among other things. GAO has conducted reviews focused on various aspects of EPA's programs and operations. Through this work, GAO has made numerous recommendations to improve EPA's performance and the efficiency and effectiveness of its programs and operations.

GAO continuously engages with executive branch agencies to ensure its recommendations are implemented. For example, GAO regularly follows up with agencies on its recommendations and posts their status online. Also, in 2015, GAO sent letters to the heads of key executive branch agencies, including EPA, identifying unimplemented recommendations that warrant priority attention.

This statement discusses (1) the status of EPA's implementation of GAO recommendations for fiscal years 2006 through 2015 and how these recommendations relate to EPA programs and operations and (2) benefits realized by EPA based on GAO's work, including through implementing GAO's recommendations. It is based on GAO's prior work from October 2005 through September 2015 and an analysis of recommendations GAO made to EPA during this period from data maintained in an internal database used to track the status of GAO recommendations.

View [GAO-16-722T](#). For more information, contact Alfredo Gómez at (202) 512-3841 or gomezj@gao.gov.

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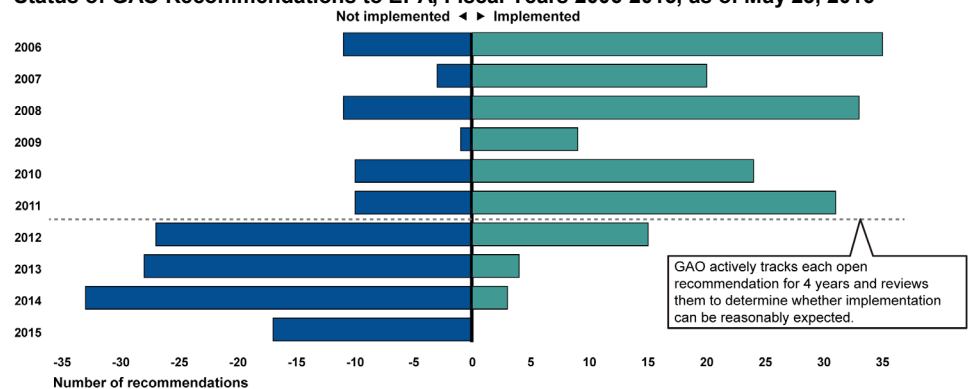
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Status of GAO Recommendations to EPA

What GAO Found

As of May 23, 2016, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had implemented 174 of the 325 recommendations GAO made in fiscal years 2006 through 2015. EPA had not yet implemented the remaining 151 recommendations. The figure below shows the status of the 325 recommendations, which fall into six broad categories that relate to EPA programs and operations. These are: (1) management and operations; (2) water issues; (3) environmental contamination and cleanup; (4) toxics, chemical safety, and pesticides; (5) air quality, climate change, and energy efficiency; and (6) public health and environmental justice. Almost three-fourths of the recommendations fall into the first three categories and include actions to better manage grants, improve regulation of drinking water contaminants, and better manage hazardous waste cleanup. Most of the recommendations not yet implemented concern EPA management and operations and water issues. For example, regarding management and operations, EPA has not yet implemented GAO's recommendation to improve procedures for processing congressional committee requests for scientific advice. Similarly, for water issues, EPA has not fully implemented GAO's recommendations related to providing oversight guidance and working with states on water quality protection measures.

Status of GAO Recommendations to EPA, Fiscal Years 2006-2015, as of May 23, 2016



Source: GAO. | GAO-16-722T

GAO has identified many benefits— programmatic and process improvements and financial benefits—based on EPA taking actions on these recommendations and related work. For example, in 2010, GAO found that EPA had not maintained attention to children's health issues through agency strategies and priorities since 2000. GAO recommended that EPA's strategic plan expressly articulate children-specific goals, objectives, and targets. EPA agreed, and on September 30, 2010, EPA submitted its fiscal year 2011-2015 strategic plan to Congress, which included children's health and environmental justice as a cross-cutting strategy, and children-specific goals. In addition, GAO has identified financial benefits from implementation of its recommendations and related work. For example, in 2008, GAO identified an error in EPA's calculation of reimbursable indirect costs for hazardous waste cleanup. EPA acknowledged the error and published revised indirect costs rates. As a result, GAO estimated in 2010 that EPA had recovered or would recover \$42.2 million.