

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-801T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Energy and Commerce, House of Representatives

## 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 operations and programs. Through this work, GAO has made numerous recommendations to improve EPA's performance and the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations.

GAO follows up with executive branch agencies to determine the extent to which they have implemented its recommendations. In fiscal year 2015, GAO began sending letters annually 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 made since fiscal year 2007 and how these recommendations relate to EPA's operations and programs and (2) examples of benefits realized by EPA and others based on GAO's work, including through the agency's implementation of these recommendations. This statement is based on GAO's work since fiscal year 2007 and on an analysis of recommendations GAO has made to EPA during this period.

View [GAO-17-801T](#). For more information, contact Alfredo Gómez at (202) 512-3841 or [gomezj@gao.gov](mailto:gomezj@gao.gov).

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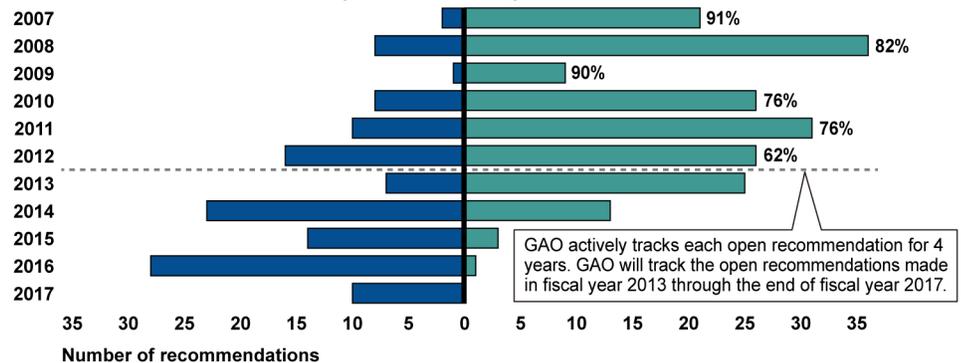
## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

### Status of GAO Recommendations Made to EPA since Fiscal Year 2007

## What GAO Found

As of August 23, 2017, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had implemented 191 of the 318 recommendations GAO made since fiscal year 2007. EPA had not yet implemented the remaining 127 recommendations. The figure below shows the status of the 318 recommendations. The recommendations fall into six broad categories that relate to EPA programs and operations: (1) management and operations; (2) water issues; (3) environmental contamination and cleanup; (4) toxics, chemical safety, and pesticides; (5) public health and environmental justice; and (6) air quality, climate change, and energy efficiency. Almost three-fourths of the recommendations fall into the first three categories and include actions for EPA to better manage grants, improve the regulation of drinking water contaminants, and better manage hazardous waste cleanup. Most of the recommendations that have not yet been implemented concern EPA management and operations and water issues. For example, regarding management and operations, EPA has not yet implemented GAO's recommendation to link its workforce plan with its strategic plan to help ensure EPA has an appropriately skilled workforce to achieve its mission. Similarly, for water issues, EPA has not fully implemented GAO's recommendation to provide guidance to regional offices on overseeing state water quality programs.

Status of GAO Recommendations Made to EPA since Fiscal Year 2007, as of August 23, 2017  
Not implemented ◀ ▶ Implemented



Source: GAO. | GAO-17-801T

GAO has identified many benefits—that is, process and programmatic improvements and financial benefits—based on EPA taking actions on GAO's recommendations and related work. For example, in October 2012, GAO recommended that EPA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) develop guidelines to assist states in developing uniform environmental analyses to meet state and federal requirements for water and wastewater infrastructure projects. EPA and USDA issued a joint memorandum in February 2017 that, among other things, highlighted best practices to eliminate duplicative environmental reviews. In addition, GAO has identified financial benefits from the implementation of its recommendations and related work. For example, during the course of work related to a July 2008 report, GAO identified an error in EPA's calculation of recoverable 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.