United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

OFFICE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION: DATA ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT

The EPA requires access to many sources of data and information to fulfill its mission of protecting human health and the natural environment. The data and information that the EPA collects or acquires in partnership with others are essential in supporting environmental decision-making, scientific research, programmatic activities, and the enforcement of environmental laws and regulations.

Purpose

The Office of Information Collection (OIC) strives to ensure that the data needed to carry out the EPA's mission are available and to maximize the value of the Agency's investment in data and information. OIC collaborates with EPA programs and regions, as well as Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners, to support the collection, management, use, and/or dissemination of a number of key databases and inventories. Joint efforts involving internal and external partners have allowed the EPA to leverage its investment in data acquisition to gain access to millions of dollars worth of environmental data.

Current Partnerships

- Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data
- National Land Cover Database (NLCD)
- Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS)
- National Watershed Boundary Dataset (NWBD)
- National Digital Orthophoto Program
- Partnerships with other Federal Agencies (USGS, FGDC)

Background

During the creation of the Office of Environmental Information (OEI) in 1999, both internal and external stakeholders urged the new organization to include a comprehensive data acquisition function. This function was established in OIC to perform the following tasks:

- Coordinate and collaborate with program, regional, Federal, State, and Tribal partners to acquire key datasets;
- Develop strategies to obtain and manage environmental data obtained from other sources (e.g., U.S. Geological Survey (USGS);
- Participate in external planning efforts for data acquisition, including non-regulatory and geospatial data; and
- Identify and manage interagency agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) for data acquisition with other Federal agencies, States, Tribes, and the private sector.

Current Activities

OIC works with internal and external partners to develop the data infrastructure needed to support Agency decision-making, information integration, and various mapping tools and applications. Some of the key data efforts include the following:

- ***Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data***
  D&B data are available to EPA programs and regions via the Intranet and provide valuable information about U.S. businesses that can be used for enforcement and compliance and rulemaking activities.

- ***National Land Cover Data (NLCD)***
  The NLCD project was initiated in 1992 by several Federal agencies to acquire remote sensing data needed for environmental monitoring programs. The NLCD includes landcover data for the conterminous United States and is now used widely for land-use planning, hydrological analyses, and ecological assessments.
- ***Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS)***
  ITIS is a comprehensive, standardized database of the scientific and common names of organisms, which is available via the Internet. The collection of the data in ITIS has been made possible by partnerships among a number of government, academic, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- ***Other Datasets***
  The EPA works with other government entities individually and through groups such as the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) to provide the Agency with access to other types of geospatial data and information. For example, the EPA is working with the USGS to gain access to key datasets such as the NLCD (as mentioned above), National Hydrography Data (NHD), National Elevation Data (NED), National Elevation Dataset – Hydrological Derivatives (NED-H), and the National Watershed Boundary Dataset (NWBD). In addition, as funding permits, OIC will work to acquire datasets that are used by a number of EPA offices for mapping, planning, enforcement, and environmental management purposes. Examples of such datasets might include the location of schools, roads, and zip codes.

Locational Data Improvement Activities

OIC continues to pursue efforts to improve the quality of the Agency's locational data. Accurate data on the location of regulated facilities, watersheds, air quality non-attainment areas, and point and nonpoint sources of pollution are essential in targeting the Agency's programmatic efforts and resources as effectively as possible. In addition, reliable locational data about industrial facilities, as well as environmental hazards and conditions, are essential in protecting homeland security and in integrating data across environmental media and geographic locations. OIC also works with EPA programs and regions to develop and maintain locational data policies that foster the collection of accurate and precise locational data and metadata that meet both EPA and Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) standards.

Geospatial Data Index (GDI)

OIC has developed the Geospatial Data Index (GDI) to provide EPA personnel with information about the Agency's extensive geospatial data holdings and other sources of valuable locational data. GDI is available via the Intranet (http://intranet.epa.gov/geoindex/) and provides programs and regions with an extensive index of geospatial information that is readily available to support their programmatic and regulatory responsibilities. By providing a mechanism for sharing available geospatial data, GDI helps offices avoid duplicative data collection activities and identify opportunities for collaboration with other programs/regions on new data collections. The GDI along with the EPA's National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) website, the Environmental Information Management System (EIMS), will provide a foundation for the EPA to share its geospatial data with other government agencies through the interagency Geospatial One-Stop Initiative.

For More Information, Contact:

Matthew Leopard
Chief, Information Exchange Partnership Branch
Phone: (202) 566-1698
E-mail: Leopard.Matthew@epa.gov

Revised March 2004