



**US Army Corps
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Construction Engineering
Research Laboratory

Fact Sheet

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (FWS) ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AUDIT TOOLS

The Problem

The number and complexity of environmental regulations at both the Federal and state levels have been increasing rapidly in recent years. With the 1992 promulgation of the Federal Facilities Compliance Act which waive Federal agencies immunity from fines relating to hazardous waste violations, scrutiny of Department of Defense (DOD) facilities' environmental compliance programs has intensified. This scrutiny continues to grow as other environmental statutes are amended to waive Federal agencies' immunity from fines (e.g., the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1996).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Service Pollution Control Office (SPCO) approached the U.S. Army Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (CERL) in 1992 for help in developing an environmental compliance auditing program for the FWS based on CERL's having performed similar activities for DOD.

The Technology

Upon reviewing the operations and infrastructures at FWS facilities, it became evident that the FWS did not need a document as large and complex as that used by DOD. When first issued in 1993, the Environmental Compliance Audit Handbook (ECAH) addressed compliance with Federal environmental regulations in the areas of air quality, hazardous materials, hazardous waste, pesticides management, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), pollution prevention, program management, petroleum/oil/lubricants (POLs), solid waste, storage tanks, wastewater, and drinking water. At the same time the Federal ECAH was emerging, state supplements to ECAH were also under development. As agency specific guidance is developed (such as FWS Policy) to address gaps in environmental regulations identified through the compliance auditing process, they are incorporated into ECAH.

During the first 2 years of the program, CERL trained FWS representatives in seven regions to perform environmental compliance audits by conducting training classes, leading the audit teams, and then participating on FWS personnel led audit teams. During this period, CERL also developed a root cause code system that will enable the SPCO to identify not only the noncompliance deficiency, but also the issue which led to the deficiency.

A static numbering/classification system was implemented in FY96 to link the Federal and state ECAH handbooks and enable the production of update/insert pages for the FWS Manual instead of entirely new documents each fiscal year.

As the environmental compliance audit programs evolved, it became evident that a tool was needed to identify sites that, due to their lack of facilities and/or permanent operations, did not need an actual site visit. To this end CERL developed the Informal Compliance Audit questionnaire. Once completed by the site manager, this questionnaire indicates areas of environmental concerns and enables the Regional Environmental Coordinator to determine the need for a site visit.

To ensure continued excellence in the environmental compliance audit program, CERL has developed a quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) form to be used by observers of the compliance audit team and the audit process. CERL also performs QA/QC assessments for FWS.

Benefits/Savings

ECAH and the state supplements provide a common baseline for the review of environmental programs at FWS facilities. The linked static numbers/classification scheme facilitates comparison of state and Federal regulatory requirements. The performance of the audits and root cause analysis has led to the creation of new training emphasis in the FWS and the development of policies to improve environmental practices at FWS facilities. The implementation of a risk assessment of sites has reduced the number of facilities that are audited which do not have regulated environmental concerns. The ongoing effort to QA/QC the audit teams and program development/ implemented ensures continued evolution and improvement.

Status

ECAH is updated in July of each fiscal year. State supplements are updated as required by the SPCO. The handbooks are used by the FWS in performing compliance audits and day-to-day operations.
Point of Contact

ECAH, State Supplements, QA/QC, and program development: CERL POC is Tina M. Hurt, COMM 217-373-3441, toll-free 800-USACERL; Fax 217-373-3430, e-mail t-hurt@cecer.army.mil; or CERL, ATTN: CN-E, P.O. Box 9005, Champaign, IL 61826-9005.

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