

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Freedom of Information Act 1998 Annual Report (October 1, 1997 - September 30, 1998)

I. Basic Information Regarding Report

A. Questions about the report should be directed to:

Alexandra Mallus
Departmental FOIA Officer
Office of Information Resources Management (OIRM)
Department of the Interior (DOI)
1849 C Street, NW
MS-5312-MIB
Washington, DC 20240
Telephone No.: (202) 208-5342

B. The electronic address for this report on DOI's World Wide Web site is:

<http://www.doi.gov/foia/98anrep.htm>.

C. A copy of this report in paper form may be obtained by contacting the Departmental FOIA Officer (see A, above).

II. How to Make a FOIA Request (see DOI's **Guide for Obtaining Information** which is located at the following Internet address: <http://www.doi.gov/foia/foia-guide.htm>).

A. FOIA requests should be submitted to the FOIA contact at the bureau/office where the records are maintained. If it is unclear where to send the request, contact the Departmental FOIA Officer. A list of DOI's FOIA contacts may be found at the following Internet address:
<http://www.doi.gov/foia/contacts.html>.

B. While 18 may reflect the median number of days to process a request in DOI (see Line VII.A.1.b.), the timeframes in a large, highly decentralized organization, such as DOI, are often longer than they would be in a small, centralized agency. In DOI, the response time varies considerably depending on the existing workload, the complexity of the request, the volume of responsive records, and the need to consult and coordinate with other bureaus/offices and agencies.

C. DOI makes records available to the public unless the information is protected by one or more of the nine specific FOIA exemptions and disclosure is either prohibited by statute or Executive order, or disclosure could potentially result in harm to an individual, a commercial entity, or the Government (see 43 CFR § 2.16(c)(2) and § 2.21).

III. Definitions of Terms and Acronyms Used in the Report

A. Agency-specific acronyms or other terms. N/A

B. Basic terms, expressed in common terminology.

1. FOIA/PA request -- Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act request. A FOIA request is generally a request for access to records concerning a third party, an organization, or a particular topic of interest. A Privacy Act request is a request for records concerning oneself; such requests are also treated as FOIA requests. (All requests for access to records, regardless of which law is cited by the requester, are included in this report).
2. Initial Request -- a request to a Federal agency for access to records under the Freedom of Information

Act.

3. Appeal -- a request to a Federal agency asking that it review at a higher administrative level a full denial or partial denial of access to records under the Freedom of Information Act, or any other FOIA determination such as a matter pertaining to fees.
4. Processed Request or Appeal -- a request or appeal for which an agency has taken a final action on the request or the appeal in all respects.
5. Multi-track processing -- a system in which simple requests requiring relatively minimal review are placed in one processing track and more voluminous and complex requests are placed in one or more other tracks. Requests in each track are processed on a first-in/first-out basis. A requester who has an urgent need for records may request expedited processing (see below).
6. Expedited processing -- an agency will process a FOIA request on an expedited basis when a requester has shown an exceptional need or urgency for the records which warrants prioritization of his or her request over other requests that were made earlier.
7. Simple request -- a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in its fastest (nonexpedited) track based on the volume and/or simplicity of records requested.
8. Complex request -- a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in a slower track based on the volume and/or complexity of records requested.
9. Grant -- an agency decision to disclose all records in full in response to a FOIA request.
10. Partial grant -- an agency decision to disclose a record in part in response to a FOIA request, deleting information determined to be exempt under one or more of the FOIA's exemptions; or a decision to disclose some records in their entireties, but to withhold others in whole or in part.
11. Denial -- an agency decision not to release any part of a record or records in response to a FOIA request because all the information in the requested records is determined by the agency to be exempt under one or more of the FOIA's exemptions, or for some procedural reason (such as because no record is located in response to a FOIA request).
12. Time limits -- the time period in the Freedom of Information Act for an agency to respond to a FOIA request (ordinarily 20 working days from proper receipt of a "perfected" FOIA request).
13. "Perfected" request -- a FOIA request for records which adequately describes the records sought, which has been received by the FOIA office of the agency or agency component in possession of the records, and for which there is no remaining question about the payment of applicable fees.
14. Exemption 3 statute -- a separate Federal statute prohibiting the disclosure of a certain type of information and authorizing its withholding under FOIA subsection (b)(3).
15. Median number -- the middle, not average number. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the median number is 7.
16. Average number -- the number obtained by dividing the sum of a group of numbers by the quantity of numbers in the group. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the average number is 8.

IV. Exemption 3 Statutes

A 1. and 2. List of Exemption 3 statutes relied on by DOI during current fiscal year with a brief description of the type of information withheld under each statute, and a statement of whether a court has upheld the use of each statute.

a. Rule 6(e) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

1) Used to withhold grand jury material.

2) The D.C. Circuit has concluded that Rule 6(e) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, regulating disclosure of matters occurring before a grand jury, satisfies exemption (3)'s "statute" requirement because it was specially amended by Congress in 1977. Fund for Constitutional Gov't v. National Archives & Records Serv., 656 F.2d 856, 867 (D.C. Cir. 1981).

b. Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, 16 U.S.C. § 470hh(a).

1) Used to withhold: the location of Native American burial sites, shipwrecks, and cultural sites; and a copy of the Fence Lake - Acoma Trail map and letter to the Acoma Pueblo.

2) DOI is not aware of any court cases upholding the use of this statute.

c. National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980, 16 U.S.C. § 470w-3.

1) Used to withhold the location of shipwrecks and primitive paintings; and a copy of the Fence Lake - Acoma Trail map and letter to the Acoma Pueblo.

2) DOI is not aware of any court cases upholding the use of this statute.

d. Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988, 16 U.S.C. § 4301.

1) Used to withhold primitive painting locations.

2) DOI is not aware of any court cases upholding the use of this statute.

e. National Defense Authorization Act For Fiscal Year 1997 (contains a provision which amends the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 (41 U.S.C. § 253b)).

1) Used to withhold certain contract proposals.

2) DOI is not aware of any court cases upholding the use of this statute.

f. Transportation Safety Act of 1974, 49 U.S.C. § 1114.

1) Used to withhold certain information pertaining to accident investigations.

2) A section of the Act (49 U.S.C. § 1905), which states that the National Safety Transportation Board shall withhold from public disclosure cockpit voice recordings associated with accident investigations, was found to fall within subpart (A) of exemption (3) (McGilvra v. National Transportation Safety Board, 840 F. Supp. 100, 102 (D. Colo. 1993)). In 1994, Congress amended the Act and § 1905 became § 1114. DOI is not aware of any other cases where a court has upheld the use of this statute.

g. Ethics in Government Act of 1978, 5 U.S.C. App. 4 § 107.

1) Used to withhold a confidential financial disclosure report for non-SES, non-Schedule C, and non-Presidential appointed employees.

2) In Meyerhoff v. EPA (958 F.2d 1498, 1502 (9th Cir. 1992)), the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit held that a provision of the Act, protecting the financial disclosure reports of special Government employees, meets the requirement of subpart (A) of exemption (3).

V. Initial FOIA/PA Access Requests

A. Numbers of initial requests.

1. Number of requests pending as of end of preceding fiscal year 326
2. Number of requests received during current fiscal year 5,221
3. Number of requests processed during current fiscal year 5,002
4. Number of requests pending as of end of current fiscal year 545

B. Disposition of initial requests.

1. Number of total grants 3,225
2. Number of partial grants 647
3. Number of denials 274

a. Number of times each FOIA exemption used (counting each exemption once per request)

- (1) Exemption 1 0
- (2) Exemption 2 11
- (3) Exemption 3 29
- (4) Exemption 4 127
- (4) Exemption 5 226
- (6) Exemption 6 365
- (7) Exemption 7 (A) 62
- (8) Exemption 7 (B) 8
- (9) Exemption 7 (C) 101
- (10) Exemption 7 (D) 5
- (11) Exemption 7 (E) 4
- (12) Exemption 7 (F) 1
- (13) Exemption 8 0
- (14) Exemption 9 2

4. Other reasons for nondisclosure (total) 1,056

a. no records	<u>519</u>
b. referrals	<u>218</u>
c. request withdrawn	<u>126</u>
d. fee-related reason	<u>65</u>
e. records not reasonably described	<u>45</u>
f. not a proper FOIA request for some other reason	<u>26</u>
g. not an agency record	<u>28</u>
h. duplicate request	<u>29</u>
i. other(specify)	<u>0</u>

VI. Appeals of Initial Denials of FOIA/PA Requests.

A. Numbers of appeals.

1. Number of appeals received during fiscal year 246
2. Number of appeals processed during fiscal year 209

B. Disposition of appeals.

1. Number completely upheld 70
2. Number partially reversed 42
3. Number completely reversed 87

a. Number of times each FOIA exemption used (counting each exemption once per appeal)

(1) Exemption 1	<u>0</u>
(2) Exemption 2	<u>2</u>
(3) Exemption 3	<u>1</u>
(4) Exemption 4	<u>7</u>
(5) Exemption 5	<u>21</u>

(6) Exemption 6	<u>31</u>
(7) Exemption 7(A)	<u>9</u>
(8) Exemption 7(B)	<u>0</u>
(9) Exemption 7(C)	<u>5</u>
(10) Exemption 7(D)	<u>1</u>
(11) Exemption 7(E)	<u>1</u>
(12) Exemption 7(F)	<u>1</u>
(13) Exemption 8	<u>0</u>
(14) Exemption 9	<u>0</u>

4. Other reasons for nondisclosure (total) 66

a. no records	<u>29</u>
b. referrals	<u>0</u>
c. request withdrawn	<u>8</u>
d. fee-related reason	<u>19</u>
e. records not reasonably described	<u>1</u>
f. not a proper FOIA request for some other reason	<u>0</u>
g. not an agency record	<u>1</u>
h. duplicate request	<u>1</u>
i. other(specify)	<u>7</u>
-Glomar response used	<u>1</u>
-Appeal moot because records were released	<u>3</u>
-Appeal closed because appellant sued and issues in the appeal were addressed in the litigation.	<u>3</u>

VII. Compliance with Time Limits/Status of Pending Requests

A. Median processing time for requests processed during the year.

1. Regular requests

a. number of requests processed 4,994

b. median number of days to process 18

2. Requests accorded expedited processing

a. number of requests processed 8

b. median number of days to process 4.5

B. Status of pending requests.

1. Number of requests pending as of end of current fiscal year 545

2. Median number of days that such requests were pending as of that date 19

VIII. Comparisons with Previous Year(s) (Optional)

A. Comparison of numbers of requests received - Not available

B. Comparison of numbers of requests processed - Not available

C. Comparison of median numbers of days requests were pending as of end of fiscal year - Not available

D. Other statistics significant to agency - Not available

E. Other narrative statements describing agency efforts to improve timeliness of FOIA performance and to make records available to the public (e.g., backlog - reduction efforts, specification of average number of hours per processed request; training activities; public availability of new categories of records):

- The Department developed a new FOIA home page which was posted to the Internet on October 31, 1997.

- To comply with the requirements of the Electronic FOIA Amendments of 1996, DOI bureaus/offices developed home pages with links to the Department's FOIA home page. The number of FOIA requests received in FY 1998 decreased, in part, because bureaus/offices are making more information available electronically.

- The Office of the Secretary (OS) began using an electronic document management and automated tracking system which should improve the efficiency, management, and security of the FOIA program in OS. Efforts are underway in several bureaus/offices to implement similar systems.

- Many bureaus/offices now accept and respond to FOIA requests electronically.

- The Office of Surface Mining (OSM) has placed frequently requested FOIA documents on its 24-hour fax-on-demand program. One of OSM's field offices publishes a monthly newsletter to members of the coal industry, regulatory agencies, and citizen and environmental groups. The newsletter announces the availability of oversight reports, annual reports, and other types of

information which are considered public information. Both of these factors have reduced the number of FOIA requests OSM receives.

- The decentralization of OSM's FOIA program has improved the timeliness of the office's FOIA responses.

- During FY 1998, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs conducted FOIA and Privacy Act training for their employees in the field.

- FOIA Coordinators from BLM and the National Park Service were detailed to the BLM Headquarters Office, which helped to reduce the existing backlog of FOIA requests.

IX. Costs/FOIA Staffing.

A. Staffing Levels.

1. Number of full-time FOIA personnel 17
2. Number of personnel with part-time or occasional FOIA duties (in total work years) 115
3. Total number of personnel (in work years) 132

B. Total Costs (including staff and all resources).

1. FOIA processing (including appeals) \$4,030,094
2. Litigation-related activities (estimated) \$118,862
3. Other administrative costs \$170,827
4. Total costs \$4,319,783
5. Comparison with previous year(s) (including percentage of change)(optional)-Not available

C. Statement of additional resources needed for FOIA compliance (optional)-Not available

X. Fees

A. Total amount of fees collected by agency for processing requests \$95,672

B. Percentage of total costs 2

XI. FOIA Regulations (Including the Fee Schedule)

A copy of DOI's FOIA regulations, including the fee schedule (43 CFR Part 2, Subparts A & B) may be found at the following Internet address: <http://www.doi.gov/foia/foiaregs.html>. A copy of the regulations in paper form may be obtained by contacting the Departmental FOIA Officer (see I. A., above). Please note that DOI's FOIA regulations are in the process of being revised.



- [Click here to view previous DOI FOIA Annual Reports](#)

January 29, 1999

Mrs. Pamela Maida
Office of Information and Privacy
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Flag Building, Room 570
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Dear Mrs. Maida:

Under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552(e), enclosed is the Department of the Interior's annual report of activities for fiscal year 1998. The report also may be found at the following Internet address: <http://www/doi.gov/foia/98anrep.htm>.

If you have any questions regarding the enclosed report, please contact me at (202) 208-5342.

Sincerely,

/s/

Alexandra Mallus
Departmental Freedom of
Information Act Officer

Enclosure

cc:

Richard Huff, DOJ (w/o enclosure)
Daniel Metcalfe, DOJ (w/o enclosure)