



# **Avoiding the Looming Black Hole: Managing Electronic Records for Now and the Future**

Participant Guide



December 2008

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# Welcome

Welcome to today's Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) NPS course titled, *Avoiding the Looming Black Hole: Managing Electronic Records for Now and the Future*. This three-hour class will consist of live instruction via TEL from the US Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. This session will provide an overview of the importance of records management.

## **Instructor**

Michael Grimes has served as the Service Records Officer since 2000, providing guidance and support to agency staff concerning records management. He performs these duties under the direction of the Deputy Chief Information Officer for Portfolio Management and Strategic Planning in WASO.

Prior to coming to the National Park Service, Michael was an archivist at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC and College Park, Maryland. He has also worked at the Smithsonian Institution, at the Baltimore City Archives and in the Special Collections at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. Additionally, Michael has served as an instructor for the USDA Graduate School in Washington, DC.

## **Audience**

This course is designed for all NPS employees who work with NPS records.

## **How to Interact with the Instructor**

You are encouraged you to ask questions and share your comments with the instructor throughout this TELNPS course.

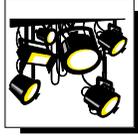
If you were physically in the classroom with the instructor, you would raise your hand to let her/him know you had a question or comment. Then you would wait for the instructor to recognize you and ask for your question. We are all familiar with that “protocol” for asking questions or making comments.

With TELNPS courses, there is also a “protocol” to follow to ensure you can easily ask questions and others can participate as well. It may seem a little strange at first asking a question of a TV monitor. Remember, it is the instructor you are interacting with and not the monitor. As you ask more questions and participate in more TELNPS courses, you will soon be focusing only on the content of your question and not the equipment you are using to ask it.

As part of the TEL station equipment at your location, there are several push to talk microphones. Depending on the number of students at your location, you may have one directly in front of you or you may be sharing one with other students at your table.

When you have a question, press and hold down the push to talk button, maintaining a distance of at least 12-18 inches and say, “Excuse me [instructor’s first name], this is [your first name] at [your location]. I have a question (or I have a comment).”

Then release the push to talk button. This is important. Until you release the button, you will not be able to hear the instructor. The instructor will acknowledge you and then ask for your question or comment. Stating your name and location not only helps the instructor, but also helps other students who are participating at different locations to get to know their classmates.



# Course Overview

## Background

Many employees of the National Park Service (NPS) are unfamiliar with records management, particularly electronic records management.

This course gives an overview of the importance of electronic records management.

It also discusses their effective and efficient management, identifying and organizing electronic records, records disposition and the long-term care of records amongst other points.

## Objectives

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- State the importance of managing electronic records
- Understand principles of maintaining electronic records, including records disposition
- Understand rules of records disposition for continued access
- Understand principles of managing electronic records

## Why is it Important to Manage Electronic Records?

- We need electronic records to do our work properly
- Laws which apply to records in other formats apply to electronic records as well
- The NPS expects employees to have basic computer skills which includes an understanding of data protection and file management

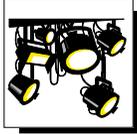
Also,

- Federal Rules of Civil Procedure have requirements concerning the discovery of electronic information
- Electronic records are an increasingly significant portion of our daily work
- 



Remember:

- NPS does not have an electronic recordkeeping system and probably will not for the foreseeable future
- All Department of Interior bureaus are to print out textual electronic records (such as electronic mail messages and word-processing documents) and then file and manage them in paper form



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# Maintaining Electronic Records

## Maintaining Electronic Records for Efficient and Effective Use

There are some principles which govern the management of electronic records in a personal as well as a shared environment.

- Electronic records must be actively managed
- Electronic records must be organized in a useable filing system
- Electronic Records must be named in a logical and consistent manner that users can understand

### What Does “Active Management” Mean?

- YOU must be the manager of your electronic records – not other staff or some software
- Managing your records should be part of your regular work, not a unique or extra activity

### Capture your notes here

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## Basic Actions You Should Take

We recommend that you take some actions to ensure efficient records management.

Print and file electronic mail messages and word-processing documents

Delete them from your database

Save documents others may need on your official shared drive

Periodically back up the work from your desktop onto a portable storage media

## Organizing Electronic Records

- Electronic records must be stored in a consistent, logical organization scheme
- Scheme should be simple
- Scheme should progress from general to specific

These ideas apply to your personal workspace and to records on a shared network drive.

## Managing Your Personal Workspace

- Your personal workspace is for reference copies of documents and working materials

- Copies of documents and data that will be needed for later use should be transferred to and stored on your shared network drive
- Organization is based principally on individual needs but should **not** be idiosyncratic

### Organizing Your Personal Workspace

- Create directories and folders that reflect the work you do
- Directories can be established for projects, programmatic areas, and so on
- Folders are created to organize documents within the directories
- Directories and folders should be flexible to allow for additions and deletions

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# Managing Electronic Mail

We recommend that you take some actions to ensure the efficient management of electronic records.

- Determine if the message and its attachments meet the definition of a Federal record
- If the message and attachments are records, print them out and file them in your office system
- Delete the electronic version unless you need it for reference purposes
- Delete the message and its attachments as soon as they have served their purposes

## Managing Your E-Mail Messages

- Save attachments that you need in your personal workspace
- Consider setting up archives for messages that you need to maintain for reference or future use



Remember:

Don't be afraid to delete messages! Fewer messages means faster.

## Organizing Shared Drives

- Establish a directory structure that reflects the work of the organization
- Establish directories for major functions (general) and sub-directories for subsidiary functions and activities (more specific)
- Directory structure and names should be controlled at the office level
- Structure should be simple and flexible

## Importance of Naming Conventions

Good naming conventions allow for documents and files to be identified in a *logical, consistent, and predictable fashion*.

This ensures that:

- Distinguishing between files becomes easier
- Storage and retrieval of files is facilitated
- Staff do not need to “reinvent the wheel” each time they name a document or file

## General Guidelines for Naming Documents and Files

- Documents and files in an individual's personal workspace are usually named by the user, but the names should not be idiosyncratic
- Documents and files in shared drives need to adhere to standards developed, supported, and documented by the organization
- All documents need to be named such that they are accessible to all potential users, including future users

## Developing Names

- Names need to be unique, brief, and descriptive
- Use only letters and numbers - no characters
- Use an underscore ( \_ ) to separate words
- Use dates to denote versions (rather than numbering them)
- Use a controlled vocabulary for terms
- Different types of documents and files need different structures for their names



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# Records Disposition-

This is the **final stage** in the life cycle of records.

- Done when records are no longer needed for current agency business
- Includes destruction or deletion of records and transfer to a storage facility such as a records center or an archives
- Needs to be done for electronic records too!

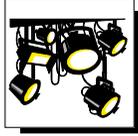
## Records Schedules

- The NPS Records Management Schedule (formerly known as NPS-19, Appendix B [Rev. 5-03]) provides directions for what to do with NPS records
- General Records Schedule 20 (Electronic Records) covers NPS records too
- *Records may not be destroyed or transferred without an item in one of these schedules!*

## The Value of Records

### Two Types of Records:

- Temporary Records: destroyed after a specified period of time
- Permanent Records: maintained forever--needed to manage resources, document work



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# Transferring Records

When records are no more in constant use, they are **inactive records**.

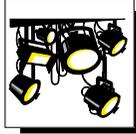
- Inactive records may be transferred to an off-site storage facility to reduce cost of maintenance in a office
- They may go to a Federal Records Center (FRC), a park archives or to the custody of the National Archives
- The National Archives now also will pre- accession permanent electronic records

## Transferring Records to a FRC:

- A new option for electronic records!
- Done for both temporary and permanent records
- Records are still NPS records and are available when needed
- The FRC manages records per NPS instructions

Transfers are made with the Records Transmittal and Receipt. *See Appendices for SF135 (Records Transmittal and Receipt).*





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# Managing Electronic Records for Long-Term Access and Use

We must:

- Continue to actively manage data (including backing up and migrating data)
- Use quality media to store records
- Store data in a limited number of formats
- Create and store documentation with the data
- Take good physical care of the records

## Continuing to Actively Manage Data

- Back up data on a regular basis
- Can be done fully, incrementally or differentially (only modified files)
- You must back up the work on your desktop!
- Data stored in networks are typically backed up on a schedule
- Must protect the backed up files too!

## Migration

- A necessary activity that will ensure that data remains accessible
- Migration involves moving data from one format and/or storage media to another format or storage media
- Usually done to ensure compatibility with software and media
- Media deterioration also will require periodic migration
- Like backups, migration can be done fully, incrementally or differentially

## Media for Storing Data for the Long-Term

- Using removable media (rather than a hard drive or a network) will help safeguard data
- Magnetic tapes that meet the standards set forth in 36 CFR 1228.270(1), either reel to reel tapes or cartridges, are acceptable
- Compact Discs (CDs) and DVDs are inexpensive options for desktop use
- CDs and DVDs, if handled appropriately, might last up to 5 years. Magnetic tape could give up to 10 years of reliable service

- Using removable media (rather than a hard drive or a network) will help safeguard data
- *Migration will, in part, address this issue*
- The formats accepted by the National Archives for permanent records work well for the long-term storage of data
- Other formats that may work for long-term preservation include Rich Text Format (RTF), Portable Document Format (PDF) and PDF/A and eXtensible Markup Language (XML)

## Capture your notes here

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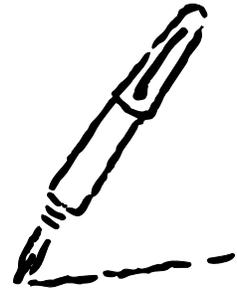
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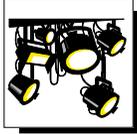
### The Importance of Documentation (Metadata)

- Metadata (data about data) describes the attributes of electronic data, including their structure, content and context
- Future users of the data need this information to use it effectively!

- Documentation includes a description of the system, technical characteristics of the data, record layout, field names and sizes, data form and other such information

### **Physical Care of Electronic Media**

- All electronic media is fragile and will be damaged by light, heat or humidity
- Keep equipment and media clean
- Thorough guidance for the care of electronic media can be found in *Conserve-O-Gram* Number 19/19 and 19/20 (September, 1996)
- Long-term care of electronic media is really an *archival* issue



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# Final Thoughts on Managing Electronic Records

- The importance of what the NPS does demands that we take excellent care of our electronic records
- The business of caring for these records needs to be part of our other business processes
- Everyone is responsible for doing records management
- If you are unsure of what to do, ask for help!



## Points to Remember

Be sure you know:

- That electronic records can be Federal records
- What active management means
- The steps to managing electronic records for continued access
- Appropriate ways to organize and manage your personal and shared space



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# Course Credit

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Take the on-line evaluation at

[www.nps.gov/training/tel](http://www.nps.gov/training/tel)

- Click on the DOI Learn tab
- Go to the link under Class Evaluations for *Avoiding the Looming Black Hole: Managing Electronic Records for Now and for the Future*
- Please complete the evaluation within 2 weeks of the course.

# APPENDICES

## **Appendix A:**

SF-135 Records Transmittal and Receipt

<http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/formslibrary.do?viewType=DETAIL&formId=C99BD3A71E184FF185256A3E0064FC2C>

## **Appendix B:**

SF 258 Agreement to Transfer Records to the National Archives of the United States

<http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/formslibrary.do?viewType=DETAIL&formID=ADFDDOEAB1EAD8DB8B85256A3E006707B2>

**RECORDS TRANSMITTAL AND RECEIPT**

Complete and send original and two copies of this form to the appropriate Federal Records Center for approval prior to shipment of records. See specific instructions on reverse.

PAGE 1 OF PAGES

1. TO (Complete the address for the records center serving your area as shown in 36 CFR 1228.150.)  
**Federal Records Center**

5. FROM (Enter the name and complete mailing address of the office retiring the records. The signed receipt of this form will be sent to this address)

2. AGENCY TRANSFER AUTHORIZATION  
TRANSFERRING AGENCY OFFICIAL (Signature and title) DATE

3. AGENCY CONTACT  
TRANSFERRING AGENCY LIAISON OFFICIAL (Name, office and telephone No.)

4. RECORDS CENTER RECEIPT  
RECORDS RECEIVED BY (Signature and title) DATE

Fold Line

6. **RECORDS DATA**

ACCESSION NUMBER			VOLUME <i>(cu. ft.)</i>	AGENCY BOX NUMBERS	SERIES DESCRIPTION <i>(With inclusive dates of records)</i>	RESTRIC- TION	DISPOSAL AUTHORITY <i>(Schedule and item number)</i>	DISPOSAL DATE	COMPLETED BY RECORDS CENTER			
RG	FY	NUMBER							LOCATION	SHELF PLAN	CONT. TYPE	AUTO. DISP.
<i>(a)</i>	<i>(b)</i>	<i>(c)</i>	<i>(d)</i>	<i>(e)</i>	<i>(f)</i>	<i>(g)</i>	<i>(h)</i>	<i>(i)</i>	<i>(j)</i>	<i>(k)</i>	<i>(l)</i>	<i>(m)</i>

# Appendix B: Agreement to Transfer Records to the National Archives of the United States

<b>AGREEMENT TO TRANSFER RECORDS TO THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF THE UNITED STATES</b>		1. INTERIM CONTROL NO. (NARA Use Only)
<b>TERMS OF</b> <p>The records described below and on the attached <u>  X  </u> pages are deposited in the National Archives of the United States in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2107. The transferring agency certifies that any restrictions on the use of these records are in conformance with the requirements of 5 U.S.C. 552.</p> <p>In accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2108, custody of these records becomes the responsibility of the Archivist of the United States at the time of transfer of the records. It is agreed that these records will be administered in accordance with the provisions of 44 U.S.C. Chapter 21, 36 CFR XII, 36 CFR Part 1256, and such other rules and regulations as may be prescribed by the Archivist of the United States (The Archivist). Unless specified and justified below, no restrictions of the use of these records will be imposed other than the general and specific</p>	<b>AGREEMENT</b> <p>restrictions on the use of these records will be imposed other than the general and specific restrictions on the use of records in the National Archives of the United States that have been published in 36 CFR Part 1256 or in the <i>Guide to the National Archives of the United States</i>. The Archivist may destroy, donate, or otherwise dispose of any containers, duplicate copies, unused forms, blank stationery, nonarchival printed or processed material, or other non-record material in any manner authorized by law or regulation. Without further consent, the Archivist may destroy deteriorating or damaged documents after they have copied in a form that retains all of the information in the original document. The Archivist will use the General Records Schedule and any applicable records disposition schedule (SF 115) of the transferring agency to dispose of nonarchival materials contained in this deposit.</p>	
<b>2A. AGENCY APPROVAL</b>	<b>3A. NARA APPROVAL</b>	
<b>2B. NAME, TITLE, MAILING ADDRESS</b> <b>Michael Grimes</b> <b>National Park Service</b> <b>Department of the Interior</b> <b>1849 C Street, NW (2605)</b> <b>Washington, D.C. 20240-0001</b>	<b>3B. NAME, TITLE, MAILING ADDRESS</b> <b>Michael Carlson</b> <b>National Archives &amp; Records Administration</b> <b>Director, Electronic &amp; Special Media Records</b> <b>Services Division</b> <b>8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001</b>	

## RECORDS INFORMATION

4A. RECORDS SERIES TITLE <b>Natural Landmarks System.</b>		
4B. DATE SPAN OF SERIES <b>As of May, 2004</b> <i>(Attach any additional description)</i>		
5A. AGENCY OR ESTABLISHMENT <b>Department of the Interior</b>	9. PHYSICAL FORMS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paper Documents                    ___ Posters ___ Paper Publications                ___ Maps and Charts ___ Microfilm/Microfiche            ___ Arch/Eng Drawings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electronic Records                ___ Motion/Sound/Video ___ Photographs                        ___ Other <i>(specify)</i> : _____	
5B. AGENCY MAJOR SUBDIVISION <b>National Park Service</b>		
5C. AGENCY MINOR SUBDIVISION		
5D. UNIT THAT CREATED RECORDS	10. VOLUME:                               CONTAINERS: Cu. Mtr.:    Cu.Ft.:    Number:    Type:	
5E. AGENCY PERSON WITH WHOM TO CONFER ABOUT THE RECORDS Name: Bill Commins Telephone Number: 202-513-7166	1. DATE RECORDS ELIGIBLE FOR TRANSFER TO THE ARCHIVES <b>ASAP</b>	
6. DISPOSITION AUTHORITY: <b>N1-79-96-1</b>	12. ARE RECORDS FULLY AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC USE? ___ YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <i>(If no, attach limits on use and justification)</i> Freedom of Information Act (b)(6))	
7. IS SECURITY CLASSIFIED INFORMATION PRESENT? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO ___ YES LEVEL:   ___ Confidential   ___ Secret   ___ Top Secret SPECIAL MARKINGS:   ___ RD/FRD   ___ SCI   ___ NATO ___ Other INFORMATION STATUS:   ___ Segregated   ___ Declassified	13. ARE RECORDS SUBJECT TO THE PRIVACY ACT?  <i>(If yes, cite Agency System Number and Federal Register volume and page number of most recent notice and attach a copy of this notice.)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES   ___ NO	
8. CURRENT LOCATION OF RECORDS ___ Agency (Complete 8A only) ___ Federal Records Center (Complete 8B only)	14. ATTACHMENTS ___ Agency Manual Except   ___ Listing of Records Transferred ___ Additional Description <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA Form 14097 or Equivalent ___ Privacy Act Notice        ___ Microform Inspection Report ___ Other <i>(specify)</i> :            ___ SF(s) 135 _____	
8A. ADDRESS:		
8B. FRC ACCESSION NUMBER	CONTAINER NUMBERS	FRC LOCATION

**NARA PROVIDES**

15. SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS TO AGENCIES/REMARKS REGARDING DISPOSITION	RG
16. RECORDS ACCEPTED INTO THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF THE UNITED STATES Signature _____ Date _____	17. NATIONAL ARCHIVES ACCESSION NO.

***NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION***