



Senior Agency Official for Records Management 2022 Annual Report

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) requires Senior Agency Officials for Records Management (SAORM) to provide an annual report demonstrating how agencies are handling important records management initiatives as identified by NARA.

NARA uses the reports to determine the overall progress of the federal government in managing its records and the transition away from paper to digital formats, and to identify best practices and model solutions within federal agencies.

On June 28, 2019, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and NARA issued a memorandum, *Transition to Electronic Records* ([M-19-21](#)), to ensure that all federal records are created, retained, and managed in electronic formats. M-19-21 gave agencies until the end of December 2022 to comply with several specific deadlines.

On December 23, 2022, OMB and NARA issued a new memorandum, *Update to Transition to Electronic Records* ([M-23-07](#)) reinforcing the goals in M-19-21 and extending the 2022 deadlines to June 30, 2024.

Additionally, on January 1, 2021, Congress enacted the Preservation of Electronic Messages and Other Records Act, amending 44 U.S.C. Chapter 29, that requires the electronic capture, management, and preservation of such electronic records in accordance with the records disposition requirements of 44 U.S.C. Chapter 33.

This year's SAORM report provides an opportunity for agencies to report on plans and progress towards electronic recordkeeping and preservation under these requirements, as well as other important records management initiatives.

The reporting period begins on January 9, 2023, and reports are due back to NARA no later than March 10, 2023.

NARA plans to post your 2022 SAORM report on the NARA website upon receipt. Please ensure that your agency's report is a publicly releasable version. This action is in the interest of transparency in government and to promote collaboration and communication among agencies. NARA intends to list any non-responding agencies in a summary report on our website.

Instructions for Reporting:

- This template covers records management program developments, including those related to the transition to electronic recordkeeping as required by M-19-21 and M-23-07.
- Please be brief and precise in your answers. Limit answers to each question to no more than 500 words.
- Please complete the questions/items below and send the report to rmsselfassessment@nara.gov. Include the words “SAORM 2022 Annual Report - [Agency Name]” in the subject line of the email.
- If you are responsible for records management in multiple agencies, components, or bureaus, please determine how you will submit reports to NARA. While NARA prefers a comprehensive report, you may submit separate reports for each component.

NARA may follow up with agencies to obtain additional information and/or documentation related to responses provided in the template.

As in previous years, we will be validating selected questions and responses from agencies. Your agency may be selected at random to provide additional documentation and/or take part in interviews to discuss your records management program activities.

Provide the following information (required):

- Name of SAORM: Janie Simms Hipp
- Position title: General Counsel
- Address: U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

1. What agencies, bureaus, components, or offices are covered by this report and your position as SAORM and which will be reporting separately?

Please provide a list and indicate any that are new or have been changed due to reorganization or other circumstances.

All of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Departmental Administration, Staff Offices, and Agency components are covered by this report.

[USDA Organization Chart](#)

*All USDA Agencies and Staff Offices:
Office of the Executive Secretariat
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations
Assistant Secretary for Administration*

Office of the Inspector General
Office of General Counsel
Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Office of the Chief Economist
Office of Budget and Program Analysis
Office of Communications
Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement
Office of Tribal Relations
Office of Hearing and Appeals
Office of the Chief Information Officer
Under Secretary of Food Safety
 Food Safety and Inspection Service
Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs
 Agricultural Marketing Service
 Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment
 Forest Service
Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
 Food and Nutrition Service
 Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
 National Agricultural Library
Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation
 Farm Service Agency
 Risk Management Agency
 Natural Resources Conservation Service
Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs
 Foreign Agricultural Service
 Codex Alimentarius Commission
Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics
 National Institute of Food and Agriculture
 Economic Research Service
 National Agricultural Statistical Service
 Agricultural Research Service
Under Secretary for Rural Development
 Rural Utilities Service
 Rural Housing Service
 Rural Business Cooperative Service

2. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, have any of the temporary adaptations to agency business processes become permanent improvements to the management and preservation of electronic records?

X Yes

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- No
 - Not applicable, no adaptations were needed
 - Do not know

Please explain your response. (If Yes, include details of the changes and why they became permanent. If No, or Do not know, please explain your answer.)

Yes. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected records management operations. Physical records management disposition could not occur as a result of the maximum telework posture and closure of Federal Records Centers for all but emergency requests. The pandemic also forced a shift toward electronic business processes, such as increased adoption of electronic signatures, and virtual collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams, which have been incorporated into agency business processes.

3. Has your agency taken action to meet the goal to manage, preserve and transfer all permanent records in an electronic format with appropriate metadata by June 30, 2024? (M-19-21, 1.2 and M-23-07, 1.1 and 1.2)

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain your response with specific actions taken, challenges and results.

In September 2022, USDA procured an Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) that adheres to NARA and Federal recordkeeping requirements. This enterprise-wide system, called AgRecords, will be implemented at the Department beginning in FY 2023 to all USDA agencies. Although the full implementation for the Department will extend beyond the June 30, 2024, deadline over a five-year period, AgRecords will allow USDA to seamlessly identify, manage, preserve and transfer all permanent records in an electronic format with appropriate metadata to NARA as required.

4. Has your agency taken action to meet the goal to manage and preserve all temporary records in an electronic format by June 30, 2024? (M-19-21, 1.3 and M-23-07, 1.3)

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain your response with specific actions taken, challenges and results.

To bring USDA towards compliance with M-19-21, 1.3 and M-23-07, 1.3, in September 2022, USDA procured an Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) that adheres to NARA and Federal recordkeeping requirements. This enterprise-wide system, called

AgRecords, will be implemented at the Department beginning in FY 2023 to all USDA agencies. Although the full implementation for the Department will extend beyond the June 30, 2024 deadline, AgRecords will allow USDA to seamlessly identify, manage, preserve and lawfully destroy temporary records in an electronic format.

USDA is working on a consolidated plan to address compliance challenges with electronic recordkeeping requirements across the Department. Records inventories, records scheduling and digitization planning will allow USDA to identify, manage and preserve analog temporary records in an electronic format across the Department more fully. It is likely that any mitigation will extend beyond the June 30, 2024 deadline.

5. Will your agency meet the requirements of M-19-21, 1.3 and M-23-07, 1.3 to close agency-operated records storage facilities and transfer inactive, temporary records to Federal Records Centers or commercial records storage facilities by June 30, 2024?

- Yes
 No
 Not applicable, all records are in electronic format
 Do not know

Please explain your response with specific actions taken, challenges and results.

As part of the USDA consolidated plan to address recordkeeping challenges, USDA plans to evaluate its records storage spaces to achieve compliance with M-19-21, 1.3 and M-23-07, 1.3, to identify and close any agency-operated records storage facilities, and transfer inactive, temporary records to Federal Records Centers or commercial storage facilities by deadline. It is likely that any mitigation will extend beyond the June 30, 2024 deadline.

6. Does your agency have policies and procedures that incorporate records management into the information governance (IG) framework for information, data, and other agency information management? (This includes a relationship between CIO, CDO, SAORM, DRO/ARO, Records Management (RM) Staff, Security, Privacy Officers, and FOIA)

Note: The incorporation of records management into information governance is part of the framework covered by [OMB Federal Data Strategy - A Framework for Consistency \(M-19-18\)](#) as it provides a vision for managing and using federal data, along with recordkeeping requirements included in [OMB Circular A-130, Managing Information as a Strategic Resource](#).

- Yes
 No
 Do not know

Please explain your response and provide details about how your agency's policies enhance IG and RM's role or relationship to it.

In August of 2020, the USDA records management program was realigned under the General Counsel's (GC) newly established Office of Information Affairs (OIA). The GC was then appointed the Senior Agency Official for Records Management (SAORM). As the GC position was vacated in December 2020, the Principle Deputy General Counsel served in the role of Acting SAORM until August 31, 2021, when the new GC was appointed by Congress.

This strategic positioning has greatly increased the visibility of, and senior leadership support for, the records management program. Records Management has re-established critical relationships with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to accomplish mutual goals. For example, Records Management collaborated with OCIO to implement Capstone and research an information governance tool to increase USDA compliance with electronic recordkeeping requirements in M-19-21, resulting in the 2022 procurement of a system to manage all USDA records, called AgRecords.

USDA does not yet currently have the policies and procedures to incorporate records management into the information governance (IG) framework needed for records, data and information compliance. As part of the USDA consolidated plan to address recordkeeping challenges identified during the 2022 NARA Inspection, USDA plans to solidify, with leadership support, the framework creation process initiated in 2021.

7. Has your agency developed policies and procedures to ensure the capture and preservation of electronic messages, including when hardware or software is upgraded?

Note: Electronic messages means electronic mail and other electronic messaging systems that are used for purposes of communicating between individuals. Electronic messages that satisfy the definition of a federal record under the Federal Records Act are electronic records. This includes email, text messages, chat messages, voicemail, social media posts, and other similar applications. (See: [Email Management](#) and [CFR 1236: Electronic Records Management](#))

- Yes
 No
 Do not know

Please explain your response and include details of your agency's methods to capture and preserve electronic messaging records or challenges preventing you from doing so.

USDA has developed policies and procedures to capture and preserve electronic messages when hardware and software is upgraded, specifically, in 2021, when there was a potential unauthorized disposition, as reported to NARA, the Office of the Chief Operating Officer (OCIO) worked with the Departmental Records Officer (DRO) to incorporate instructions for USDA Personnel to conduct their recordkeeping responsibility as outlined in the Federal Records Act, before mobile device upgrades. These instructions were further emphasized in

the USDA 2022 Records Management Training, reaching an audience to date of over 114,000 USDA Personnel. Finally, as part of an OCIO initiative to upgrade the information security of mobile devices, in the 2022 mandatory software update, instructions were once again provided with recordkeeping as the first step in the upgrade process.

As part of the USDA consolidated plan to address recordkeeping challenges identified during the 2022 NARA Inspection, USDA plans to review electronic message preservation with the OCIO, in accordance with existing and recently updated NARA guidance related to not only electronic messaging, but to social media, text messaging, Capstone as well as other requirements.

8. Is your agency using or exploring cognitive technologies to identify records and distinguish between temporary and permanent retention?

Note: Cognitive technologies generally describe automated technologies that can be applied to recordkeeping practices and procedures. These include Artificial Intelligence, Robotic Process Automation, Software Robot or Bot, and other machine learning technologies.

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain your response. (If Yes, include details on both methods and tools being explored, the level of accuracy and how that level is determined.)

In September 2022, USDA procured an Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) that adheres to NARA and Federal recordkeeping requirements. This enterprise-wide system, called AgRecords, will be implemented at the Department beginning in FY 2023 to all USDA agencies. Although the full implementation for the Department will extend beyond the June 30, 2024 deadline, AgRecords will allow USDA to seamlessly identify, manage, preserve and transfer all permanent records in an electronic format with appropriate metadata to NARA as required. Specifically, the AgRecords system will be using the Feith platform to manage permanent and temporary records. Feith Auto-Categorizer is a proprietary tool that uses rules, workflows, and artificial intelligence text analysis to read and categorize documents without human intervention to aid USDA in seamless, compliant recordkeeping going forward.

9. Do you as SAORM regularly oversee and evaluate the effectiveness of your records management program and its compliance with statutes and regulations?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain your response including what specific measures you have incorporated into the SAORM role.

As the Senior Agency Official for Records Management, I meet quarterly with the Office of Information Affairs (OIA), in which the Departmental Records Management Program sits, and lend support for the Records Management Program. During these and weekly meetings with the Director, Office of Information Affairs, I learn about program initiatives and how I can best support records management at USDA.

In 2022, as the Senior Agency Official for Records Management, and General Counsel, I supported and funded the FY 2023 acquisition of the USDA Electronic Records Management System (ERMS), AgRecords, which will aid USDA in its compliance towards M-19-21, M-23-07, and electronic recordkeeping.

In 2022, as the Senior Agency Official for Records Management, and General Counsel, emphasized the importance of Records Management for USDA Personnel, and also worked with NARA and USDA Agency Administrators to support full transparency for the 2022 NARA Inspection. At the close of the Inspection, I met with NARA leadership to learn about the risks to the USDA records programs, and USDA records and information.

Finally, in 2022, I supported initiatives for the USDA decommissioning of Plum Island, by outlining for the agency leadership in Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) a plan to create records management oversight, with on-site staffing, of the decommissioning project at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) facility. The Office of General Counsel remains engaged with the question of records ownership at Plum Island and is working on resolving this matter with Records Management.

In 2023, I will send out a communication as an annual reminder of recordkeeping responsibilities, and work with the OIA to implement the consolidated USDA Plan of Corrective Action (PoCA) in response to the 2022 NARA Inspection.

10. Is there specific policy or guidance you need from NARA to support the strategic direction of your records management program?

- Yes
 No
 Do not know

Please explain your response and include any comments on existing, pending, and future topics.

USDA could benefit from examples of Information Governance policies from similar sized agencies. Our Agency Records Officers have also requested templates of policy, standards, and internal controls to facilitate recordkeeping across USDA. Often Agency Records Officers would like to see examples of acceptable policies, internal controls, and other metrics to ensure that they are adhering to NARA requirements. For example, on the Records

Management Self-Assessment (RMSA), our Agency Records Officers take the more conservative approach of answering that no policy exists, when there is perhaps partial compliance, to ensure that all responses are evidence-based and supported.

11. Do you have any suggestions for how NARA can better engage with you and your program in your role as SAORM?

- Yes
 No
 Do not know

Please explain your response and include any comments on previous NARA SAORM engagements, topics for future engagements, or other suggestions.

Both the NARA Appraisal Archivist, Lauren Van Zandt, and Appraisal Team 3 Supervisor Kate Flaherty have been very responsive and supportive of the USDA records management program. We appreciate their continued willingness to partner with our agency to provide guidance, improve the skill set of our existing Agency Records Officers, and update file plans and schedules. In 2022, our Appraisal Archivist Lauren Van Zandt, and supervisor Kate Flaherty committed to assisting USDA with not only our 2022 NARA Inspection, lending support, and providing insight into USDA records on calls with program offices, they went above and beyond. For example, Lauren traveled to our Plum Island facility to help identify permanent and unscheduled records at the facility for both ARS and APHIS. Kate and Lauren committed generously to assist with records scheduling for this effort, which will be ongoing into FY 2024. USDA deeply appreciates the consistent, exceptional support from the Appraisal Team, and from NARA as a whole, whether that is the Unauthorized Disposition guidance and training that Andrea Noel provides, the Federal Records Center Account service that Andrea Scherer tirelessly provides, or the guidance from the NARA Training and Policy Teams.