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April 14, 2015

On April 14, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released their fifth annual report on fragmentation, overlap, and duplication in government services. The GAO report highlighted the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) observational networks as an area of concern.

Approximately nine percent of NOAA's total appropriations have gone into the \$430 million annually needed to operate and maintain ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes observation systems, including gliders and autonomous underwater vehicles, high frequency radar, animal telemetry, and buoys which measure water quality, determine current speed and direction, monitor ocean acidification and harmful algal blooms, predict severe weather, and assist in search and rescue. NOAA's strategic plan in 2010 and implementation plan in 2012 both included goals of reduction and consolidation of observing sites, but GAO found no concrete examples of execution of this goal in practice.

The report indicates that multiple observing systems NOAA operates measure several of the same environmental parameters. NOAA maintains that these similar observation systems measure the same data at different locations and times for redundant back up in case of a partial system failure. However, because no data on possible duplication exists, NOAA is unable to verify whether there are opportunities for cost reduction or unnecessary overlaps. NOAA is currently developing a NOAA Observing Systems Integrated Analysis (NOSIA) model which may address this problem.

Source: GAO
