



*Senior Agency Official for Records Management  
2021 Annual Report*

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 also indicate any that are new or have been changed due to reorganization or other circumstances.*

[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. Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed any policies or practices related to records management at your agency?**

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

*Please explain your response (include details of specific challenges, if applicable):*

*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.*

**3. Does your agency have an established information governance framework that integrates records management, data management, and other agency information lines of business? (This includes a relationship between CIO, CDO, SAORM, DRO/ARO, RM Staff, Security, Privacy Officers, and FOIA)**

- Yes  
 No  
 Do not know

*Please provide details on what support is needed:*

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is in the process of developing an information governance framework by connecting key stakeholders, but no formal framework is yet in place. 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.*

*USDA is working to address the need for strategic partnerships with key records management stakeholders. For example, in September 2021, the Secretary created Records Management Champions for each agency at the Administrator level and above. This will elevate the importance of records management across USDA and increase the ability for records management and stakeholders to align mission.*

**4. Will your agency meet the goal to manage and preserve all permanent records in an electronic format with appropriate metadata by December 31, 2022? (M-19-21, 1.2)**

- Yes  
 No  
 Do not know

*Please explain your response (include specific goals and example metrics):*

*USDA implemented Capstone in April 2021. However, it will be necessary to create a strategic plan for USDA compliance challenges with electronic recordkeeping requirements in M-19-21. It is likely that any mitigation will extend beyond the December 31, 2022 deadline.*

**5. Will your agency meet the goal to manage and preserve all temporary records in an electronic format by December 31, 2022? (M-19-21, 1.3)**

- Yes  
 No  
 Do not know

*Please explain your response (include specific goals and example metrics):*

*USDA has conducted an initial assessment on the status of records scheduling, including temporary records schedules. It will be necessary to create a strategic plan for USDA compliance challenges with electronic recordkeeping requirements in M-19-21. Again, it is likely that any mitigation will extend beyond the December 31, 2022 deadline.*

**6. Does your agency have plans to submit to NARA a request for an exception to the M-19-21 requirements before December 31, 2022?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Do not know

*Please explain your response. If 'Yes,' please include an estimate of when you plan to submit an exception and any relevant details. If 'No' or 'Do not know,' please explain your response.*

*USDA has discussed impediments to a full records inventory with NARA; the in-office nature of the work is significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and maximum telework status. As such, it is likely that extension requests adhering to NARA requirements will extend beyond the December 31, 2022 deadline.*

**7. Is your agency utilizing the General Services Administration's Special Item Number for Electronic Records Management (518210 ERM) 6 to procure solutions to assist in transitioning to an Electronic Environment?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Do not know

*Please explain your response. If Yes: Please include specific examples of resources and how this will support records management processes. If No or Do not know: Please explain.*

*USDA will utilize GSA Special Item Number for Electronic Records Management to procure solutions for transitioning to an Electronic Environment going forward.*

**8. Has your agency developed plans to meet the requirements of M-19-21, 1.3 to store temporary records in commercial storage facilities by December 31, 2022?\***

- Yes  
 No  
 Do not know

*\*M-19-21, 1.3 includes closing of agency-operated storage facilities and no new transfers of paper records to the Federal Records Centers. Please explain your response. If 'Yes,' provide details about the use of commercial storage and other changes related to storage. If 'No' or 'Do not know,' please explain.*

*USDA plans to evaluate its records storage spaces to achieve compliance with M-19-21, 1.3.*

**9. Do you, as the SAORM, see challenges within your agency in meeting the goal of fully electronic recordkeeping?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Do not know

*Please explain your response (include details of specific challenges, if applicable):*

*There are several challenges at USDA for meeting the goal of fully electronic recordkeeping, including, but not limited to:*

- Delayed inventories and evaluations of business processes as a result of being in a "maximum telework" posture for more than two years;*
- Interrupted transfer and accession activities as a result of several Federal Records Center closures;*
- Identification of funding sources to ensure continued support of the M-19-21 mandates; and*
- Retraining AROs to develop the additional skills relative to the M-19-21 mandates.*

**10. NARA is always working on ways we can make your role as the SAORM easier, improve how we interact with you and how you interact with each other. Do you have any suggestions?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Do not know

*Please explain your response (include any comments on previous NARA SAORM engagements, topics for future engagements, or other suggestions):*

*Both the NARA Appraisal Archivist, Lauren Van Zandt, and supervisor Kate Flaherty, and the Federal Records Center Account Representative Andrea Scherer, 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. Further, we appreciate the combined efforts of the NARA Training Team to create an Agency Records Officer Credential (AROC) USDA Cohort, the first single agency cohort, to facilitate and guide USDA Agency Records Officers through the credentialing process. The Training Team has also delivered an excellent base training for the 2022 Records Management Training that deserves to be recognized for its comprehensiveness and their continued devotion to service.*