

Response to comments by Larry Carr, NCDC:

1. Where does it take into account for property that is acquired via Federal surplus/excess or loaned equipment?

Good point! - These requirements have been added.

2. (Page 7) Sounds good, but, we . . . still must have prompt updates of master property files to be successful.

Agreed!

3. (Page 9) Does item #3, imply that the Property Module will NOT BE part of CAMS?

At this point, "a part of", "integrated with", "interfaced with", are becoming fuzzy terms to me. What is important here is that we want to strive as much as possible to achieve the goal of only entering a piece of information into the CAMS system, including Personal Property, once. This means that the Personal Property System must have access to information entered into the CAMS data base tables and that this information moves seamlessly on a real-time basis and without human interaction from one CAMS data base table to another. Whether the information actually moves from one table to another or whether the information in a table is simply available and accessible to the Property System will depend on the circumstances, I am sure.

4. (Page 10) item #5, giving the PC's in the field to enter data to the master record, is long overdue...Excellent progress...

5. (Page 15) item #2 Acceptance of the product should be recorded on line (by whom?) Requisitioner or Property Custodian??

The CAMS system provides for acceptance either in the Accounts Payable area or the Procurement area. For purchased property, this information will be used by the PPS. For property that is not purchased, acceptance will need to be done within the PPS. This functionality should be made available to any authorized employee. How this is to be accomplished is an **issue** to be addressed later.

6. (Page 18) item #1 (When property is received and accepted (Is not the PAO accountable) (Not the Property Custodian) I believe we are only their agents...

I believe that technically you are correct--the Property Accountability Officer is accountable, the Property Custodian is responsible. But bottom line, we all have the responsibility to be accountable.

7. (Page 18) item #3 At NCDC the physical property inventory is maintained by a barcode scanner that transmits the current data to our MAPS database into the property module.

The point of item #3 is that we don't want to lose any functionality we currently have with the barcode scanning inventory software we currently have. That is not to say that the new PPS will not have something better to replace what we currently have.

8. (Page 18) item #3 How would the Property Cust correct errors with the on line inventory certification??

The inventory software we currently use at headquarters allows us to batch transmit the results of the inventory to NFC, automatically correcting the current location of the property recorded in the NFC data base. Once the corrections have been made in NFC, the Property Custodian certifies the inventory. I would envision the new PPS to work similarly. Once the results of the inventory are entered into the new PPS, however that is done, the Custodian would be able to get on-line, review the results, and if acceptable, sign off on the inventory electronically.

9. Page 19) item #6 When reconciling "LOST & BROKEN" property, someone has to answer for this, so where does the Property Review Board fit in?

See Page 23, item #8. The completion of a CD-52, the review of the form by the Board of Review, and a statement of the Board's conclusions as well as the sign-off by the Board, could all be accomplished on-line.

10. Page 24 item #8 Should this be added to page 19, item 6, above?

I would go the other way and put item #6 on page 19 with item #8 on page 24. The reason it appeared on page 19 at all is because of the concern for items that have been paid for and never found. But we are really talking about a process that is part of disposing of property and getting it off the books.

11. Page 26 (bottom of page) When Property Custodian's reconcile acquired property and update the property record with appropriate info (Is any other approvals needed, before this becomes "the gospel"??)(Is the RPM's notified of the changes that the PC's are making??)

Yes. What I envision is that the property record, as it is being created through various automatic and manual processes, is held in a "holding tank" of some sort until the record is complete, at which time the Property Office would review the record and "post" it to the PPS.

12. Page 28 (Physical Accountability) Will the on-line process for lost and found property include "Electronic Property Board of Reviews"??

Yes

13. Page 29 (Barcode Application Layer) Can NCDC's barcode scanner be intergrated with this new system??

I would expect that it can be; or at least interfaced to it. I do not know of any stumbling blocks at this point in time.

Response to comments by Cynthia Loitsch, PMEL:

I would . . . like to encourage the retention of enough flexibility in the system to allow the operating unit to designate the person(s) who performs the task.

I will certainly keep this in mind. This is a goal of CAMS, to ensure that the person who knows and is closest to it, puts the information in the system. In this day and age, there are very few people who are not on the network and who do not have the ability to access a system that resides on the network. It is more a matter of assigning access rights, and this needs to be done carefully to ensure that the system is not compromised. I think if we are able to implement the concept of a "holding tank" and "posting" the official record, that these issues can be addressed.

Pg. 6. - 2. - Potential Process: The edit capability needs to exist at an administrative level....not just the card holders. Accuracy of object class codes will be a very real factor if we entrust code assignment to the PMs.

The on-line review process spoken of here will reside in the Bank Card System. I do not know what capability will exist in the Bank Card System to assist PM's in the assignment of object class codes.

Also, the system needs to be able to "tie together" a split charge. Currently if an item of accountable property that shows as a \$2,000 charge on a credit card statement, is split between two separate project numbers, the item shows up on the unreconciled property listing because there is a disconnect between the \$2000 and the two \$1,000 dollar project costs.

The system must be able to handle this type of situation. It is absolutely critical. See the Concept of Operations paper for more discussion about this.

Note that the "Current Process" for #3. can be done electronically now. At PMEL we download the bank card file from the Bank Card Center; edit at PMEL to include acctng. And object class info.; then forward the file electronically to the WASC. This precludes WASC from hav[ing] to re-key in the data.

5. Potential process - I am unclear on what a skeleton property record is.

A skeleton property record is a record of an item of accountable property that is not complete, that does not include all of the information in all of the required data fields. Briefly, a skeleton property record would begin its life in the Procurement System when data fields are populated with information about the vendor, the model, the manufacturer, etc. It would acquire more data when data fields are populated based on the payment for the property in the Accounts Payable system including acquisition cost and perhaps acquisition date. A skeleton property record would become a fully fleshed-out property record once the information about the barcode number, the serial number and the location are added to the record.

NOTE: Why can't the property management system be a subset of the CAMS data warehouse? It would seem that it should be possible to populate the property management system by pulling up specific object classes..i.e. as opposed to having the property system exist outside of CAMS.

See my answer to Larry Carr above (#3).

Page 7. - 6. Potential Process - I would like to see this function done by the PC, since they need to tag the property, too.

In line with your first point, it should be possible for anyone to have the ability to access the system and add their two-cents worth towards completing the property record. NOAA needs to have set guidelines, however, as to who will have the authority and the access. This is one of the **issues** that needs to be addressed before we begin implementation of the new PPS.

How does the electronic version of the Property Acquisition form relate to the skeleton property record?

The form is what would be completed on the computer during the process of fleshing out the skeleton record.

Page 9. - 1. Potential Process - Does accounting strip relate to the bar code?

No, what "the accounting strip" refers to is the project number and organization to which the payment for the property is charged. This information should automatically become a part of the skeleton property record.

3. Potential Process - Same comment as above; i.e., can we get around electronically transferring PO data....why not just create the data base by pulling object class info. out of CAMS?

See my answer to Larry Carr above (#3).

Page 15. - 2. Potential Process - Note that the PO amount may not equal the final invoice amount; the option is to go in and edit the data....or better yet, have the system pick up the revised cost info. It looks like #4 may address this.

Correct.

Page 16. - 5. I suspect, except for the large ticket items, i.e. over \$200K, upgrades to property are not being tracked.

That is current policy.

Page 29 - Ad-hoc query environment: I'm assuming that any given organization, with a familiarity with SQL could go in and query the system. It would be nice to give users the capability to go in and download all the data for their organization code, so they could slice and dice the data off line.

Yes, this capability should, in my opinion, be made available to anyone involved in personal property within NOAA. It may be an **issue** about how public this information should be.

Response to comments by Al Lackas, NWS:

Page 7 - 6. Will they do this?

This is certainly an **issue**. What incentive is there for a PC or a bank card holder to get on the system and complete the skeleton property record?

Response to comments by Barry Culleen, Headquarters Property Team:

Page 26 - Purchase Order Acquisitions - Who will the object class codes be reviewed by? This process needs to occur when the CD-435 is being processed.

The requirements have been modified to reflect these concerns.

What fields will be included in the Unreconciled Procurement Report?

We need to make sure that we get the information out of the Procurement System that we need. Many times when dealing with contracts or BPA's the task order number is more meaningful than the contract or BPA number. This will be addressed in the detailed requirements when building the link between the Procurement System and the PPS.

In situations where there is a payment against occ 31, the Property Custodian should not have the capability to ignore or suppress the payment.

Again, we are talking about who has access and authority to do what. We will need to address each function separately.

Page 27 - Contract Acquisitions - Don't want to give Property Custodians a free hand to do anything they want to the property record or to effect reconciliation.

I think the concept of keeping the information in a holding tank until the Property Offices can review the record and post it to the official data base may ease some of your concerns here. We definitely need to make sure that the fox is not guarding the hen house. So the question is how to balance ease of access to the system and providing the Property Custodians more control over maintenance of the data records with ensuring the integrity of the data. I see the major function of the Property Offices under the new PPS to be to monitor and oversee and, when necessary, to challenge. Here again we are talking about assigning responsibilities and authority and access.

Page 28 - Financial Accountability - The current policy is to assign a separate barcode number when an item is upgraded.

The system must be able to track depreciation on capitalized items in accordance with recognized accounting standards, including when the item is upgraded. In order to track depreciation in the current NFC system, an upgrade that consists of an addition to the original item must have a separate bar code. Whether this will still be the case with the new system remains to be seen.

Physical Accountability - Any on-line inventory report that will be used to certify an inventory must be up-to-date.

I would like the system to be able to generate a report as of any given point in time, including as of this moment, but also including as of the end of the last fiscal year.

The on-line property transfer mechanism should include the ability to signify acceptance by the gaining Property Custodian.

The requirement paper has been changed to include this.

Page 32 - Database Layer - Why retain records for three years after the end of the life of the asset?

This is standard government practice and is spelled out in the General Records Schedule of the National Archives.

Response to comments by Beth McCandless and Violet Legette, NWS:

Several references are made throughout the document identifying the three methods of property acquisitions :

- bankcard
- purchase requisitions
- contracts.

For clarity the term "purchase requisitions" should be "purchase orders" when referring to the actual acquisition mechanism.

Correct. I have tried to clean that up in the requirements document.

In general, in the field, we do not understand the need to differentiate the process at all between the three mechanisms. All are processed the same from the field perspective. Each acquisition must have an object class indicating when it is property.

The processing of the acquisition will be handled by three separate areas within CAMS, so Property will need to get the information about the acquisition from these three areas. It also seems to me that you need to be talking to 3 different people about the property being acquired: the bank card holder for a bank card purchase, the requisitioner for a purchase order, and the task manager for a contract purchase.

Specific comments on each area are:

Bankcard p.6

-Section 2 - Potential Process - this is being done now in the field. All input is processed via an electronic download.

We're still dealing with paper here at headquarters.

-Section 4 - no mention is made of the current process that requires the financial posting to include the two digit month and the two digit line item number from the applicable monthly bank statement to be included as part of the item document number. Somehow this is computer generated now and often a strange month like "00" is generated and causes a discrepancy to be listed on the UPR. Frankly, I wish this was not a requirement.

They are still discussing how to configure the document number for bank cards in CAMS. Since there won't be a paper bankcard statement, the current month and line number information that we are currently dealing with won't apply.

-Section 6 - as a field PC, we have always sent in a CD 509 as the bankcard statement is transmitted to AVOID being on the UPR. This implies that we wait for the UPR to generate the discrepancy BEFORE we prepare a CD 509. Our headquarters mandates that we keep the UPR at zero, so am confused here. We totally agree that the field PC should be able to input a property record to complete the reconciliation process.

I have tried to clarify this in the requirements document. You are right, you should be sending in the CD-509 with a copy of the bank card statement before the payment shows up on the UPR.

Purchase Order p.9-11

-Section 2 - what is a product service code? and why is it needed? the field requisitioner should input the proper object class code.

The product service code is the name given by procurement to what we in property call the Federal Supply Code. I added the term to the glossary. It is needed in order for a property description to be matched to a GSA classification so when the item is finally excessed, it can be properly reported to GSA.

-Section 5 - this potential process description should be added the bankcard section also

Agree. Did this.

-flow chart - am unsure what the PO weekly archive file is since it is not used in the field.

This is an electronic archive of the purchase orders issued which is created in Procurement's Small Purchase System (SPS). Property gets a copy of this file to cross-check to make sure we received all the hard copies. We import this file into our PRS system in order to create the requests to Custodians to give us information regarding their purchase order acquisitions.

Contract Acquisition - p. 12-14

-Again, in the field this is not a separate process. We do not generate "pink" sheets and would assume the contract indicates the object class data similar to the purchase order method.

The Property office generates the "pink" sheets, which are forms sent to Custodians that they use to report property acquired. We send these out when the Custodian doesn't submit the information in a timely manner in order to encourage them to submit the information. We do this at headquarters and WASC does it as well. I am not sure what the other ASC's do.

Financial Accountability - p. 16

-Section 4 - Need to address here the process to handle "partial" payments. Often the vendor progress bills large property purchases yet it cannot be placed into the property record system until all costs are paid. Also, how do partial payments affect the depreciation process? Shouldn't all charges be disbursed before depreciation begins since the total product cost cannot be determined before then? Also, we have always been under the assumption that the full value of the property includes all costs to make it operational including shipping and installation. Lately, our finance dept has been separately disbursing shipping on a FOB origin purchase order separately to oc 2212 even though the PO had all costs distributed to the single oc 3123. Have we been under an incorrect assumption?

The value of the property item placed in the property system should include all costs to put the item in place and bring it to the point where it is performing the function for which it was purchased. This includes transportation to the site, any installation costs, etc. Depreciation should start when the item begins operation, when it is placed into service. Depreciation should be calculated against the total cost of the item.

The way I would envision the new system working is that the payments that should be applied to a piece of property would be accumulated in a bucket (another, different bucket) until the property has been accepted and placed into service so we will always know how much is in the bucket. I checked with the auditor, and she said that we would calculate depreciation against what is in the bucket when the item is accepted and placed into service. If more is added to the bucket or taken out of it afterwards, an adjustment would need to be sent to the Finance office.

Physical Accountability - p. 18-20

- Section 5 - Should there be any mention of the requirements for "Loaned" property? i.e. six month limitation; verbal confirmation during physical inventory vs bar code scanning?

Good point. Noted in Physical Accountability under Functional Requirements.

Disposal Processes - p. 21-24

- Section 5 - why is there no attempt in incorporate the federal "Computer for Learning" program that the DOC participates in to expedite transfer of computers to the local community schools?

I suppose we do need to at least mention this. Even though it really falls under the "Donation" category, we need to track what we are doing in the "Computers for Learning" program for reporting purposes. Added comment to the Potential Process under step #3 of Disposal Processes.

-Section 8 - Thought that the Board of Review also makes a recommendation for excess equipment. Is this not required? Also how will their review be incorporated into the electronic process? a check off box?

This is one **issue** where we need to get it straight between the ASC's and headquarters what the procedure should be. I do not understand the ASC's use of the Board of Review to deal with excess. It may be they are using the Board as a work-around because GSA is so difficult to deal with. Whatever, we need to fully define how Boards of Review will work in NOAA nationwide.

Functional Requirements - p.25-31

p.27 - does "multiple acquisition codes" mean "multiple line of accounting", i.e. multiple org/tasks? If not, what does this mean? If so, agree that the system definitely needs to be able to accept multiple accounting entries for one item of property because this is often a problem with the current system.

Yes, that is what is meant, and I have changed the wording to clarify this.

p.28 add in the Physical Accountability section the requirement to have an auto bar code system for physical inventory and "loan" validation. - the on-line transfer mechanism would be a wonderful solution to a time consuming current process.

The bar code system for physical inventory I felt could be an external system, that it didn't *have* to be an integrated system with the property system. I felt that it could simply interface with the new property system. However, the Department disagrees with me on this, and if you do as well, please let me know. I believe that one of the two COTS systems I am currently looking at does not have the inventory module integrated into their system. The National Climatic Data Center (see Larry Carr's comments above) hopes to be able to continue using their current inventory tracking system. Is this an **issue** we need to discuss?

Technical Requirements

-We do have the expertise to comment on this section.

Response to comments by Jorgeann Hiebert:

1. Object class codes - even with almost yearly training for bankcard holders we still get it wrong. The new system needs to prompt or check to help the user make the correct decision. (I noted that this was mentioned but not as a must have.)

This is why it is essential that Property have a chance to review the purchase requisitions before they are processed, so errors can be caught before things get too far in the system. We have been pushing to have helps built into CAMS so if that is where you are originally entering your data, you stand a better chance of getting it right. We will definitely want to have helps built into the property system if you are originally entering the property information there. Furthermore, as you state, checks can be built into the system. You shouldn't be able to enter the object class code for a capitalized airplane if you are buying a boat.

2. Interactive forms - this is a definite must. It is hard to get the PC's in our lab to get forms done and many times they quickly write them out (sometimes difficult to read). Again, this is noted in the document but anything that will cut down on errors would be appreciated.

We will definitely include edit checks to cut down on errors when entering data into the various data fields. The **issue** is how to get the PC's or other involved people to take a minute to go to the terminal and enter the data when something happens to their property inventory, and not just when they get something new.

3. URL - it helps to have this on the web. By tying this together with all of the systems proposed in the draft this should help to clear up the problems we have experienced due to the delays between finance and the property office.

What my PC's want is a simple easy to use system that will minimize errors due to someone else making errors during data entry, cut down on the time needed to do paperwork and inventories, and an ability to get answers to questions quickly.

Response to comments by Bajinder Paul, OFA:

Process and functional requirements:

Good description of high level functional requirements and processes.

Flow diagram/graphical description would be helpful for the new/recommended process.

I have developed such diagrams in the past and should be able to modify them to meet current thoughts on how things will work in the new PPS if they would be helpful.

A number of functional areas in the proposed processes require further decomposition. In other words detailed set of business rules and associated data requirements.

The requirements package was definitely a high-level look at the requirements. Once a contractor is hired and it becomes necessary to develop statements of work, the requirements will need to be spelled out in much greater detail. My intention, however, is to define what is needed as an outcome, not to define how the contractor will get us to that outcome.

In the flow charts, we need to describe data flow. Type of data, source and destination, and how the data is to be used/processed and by what function.

This information will be included in the flow charts when they are developed.

A Data dictionary would help.

A data dictionary was developed a few years ago when this project was under the umbrella of the Department. It will need a little refinement. But it was not appropriate to include it in the requirements

document. If we acquire a Commercial Off-the-shelf package, the package will determine to a great extent the terms and structures included in the data dictionary.

Need to define user types. Is this application intended to be used by line office personnel or only by RPM? A matrix of users vs. function, a matrix of function vs. location, matrix of functions vs. data would be helpful.

I have addressed the question of user types earlier in this paper. (See for example my response to Cynthia Loitsch). I will work on the matrices to try to graphically show who may be doing what in the system, etc.

A Concept of Operations document is needed that describes operationally how the application will be used, by whom and where. It is an excellent means to engage the user community and to refine requirements. The ConOps document is for the envisioned system.

In response to your comment I wrote the Concept of Operations document which everyone now has to review.

Technical Architecture:

Need to make it very clear that our target architecture is Three-tier, client/server, web based architecture, Oracle as the RDBMS.

This is spelled out in the Technical Requirements portion of the requirements document which specifically addresses the database layer, the application layer and the client layer. The Technical Architecture part of the document specifically addresses the issue of Oracle as the RDBMS on page 44.

Target is to make the application "Platform" independent, i.e., thin client.

This is addressed on page 35.

Need to develop an interface document, that describes in detail the interfaces required with external systems.

This also is outside the scope of this requirements document, but will definitely need to be addressed once it is determined what the target PPS will be that the interfaces will need to operate with.

Need to use the "Facilities Office Systems Engineering Management Plan"[. T]he document describes[s] the various phases and deliverables in software acquisition and development efforts.

Once it is decided if the COTS packages meet our needs, and we know whether we will be acquiring software or developing it, this document may help serve as a guide as to the steps that need to be followed.

Response to comments by Sharon Depiso, OFA:

In the Executive Summary, the definition of personal property (second paragraph) is confusing.

I reworded the sentence. I hope it is less confusing now. The definition is a quote from the Federal Property Management Regulations.

Suggest that the acronyms and terms on page 5 under Acquisition Processes be moved to the top of the section.

Agreed. They were definitely misplaced on the page.

Reference to the form number for a requisition is made late on page 9.

Reworked.

Page 9 is confusing - are CD-435's going to CAMS or the Procurement Office?

The Procurement Office will be receiving the electronic version of the CD-435 as part of the way the CAMS system will work.

Step 1. When a purchase requisition form (CD-435) is passed along the PP or RPM should check "object class code," "custodial area," and accounting strip [to make sure that these are accurate for property].

I have asked those working on the CAMS procurement system that they set it up so the Personal Property Office is first in line of approval for a requisition that will be processed in CAMS to ensure that we have a chance to review these data elements before the requisition even gets to Procurement.

Step 3. This was not always done and by the time it was done, data was already submitted to Facility.

Agreed. With CAMS the purchase order data will be available the instant the purchase order is cut and approved in Procurement.

Step 4. 3 & 4 should be combined. Using too many steps for a simple process.

I can do this.

Step 5. What are you saying?

I hope I have explained the concept of a skeleton property record earlier in this paper well enough so that everyone now understands what the idea is here.

Page 12. Contracts are done on CD-435. Should be same procedure.

The current processes are much the same. What is pointed out here, however, is the fact that the processing of contracts in CAMS will not be as automated as the processing of purchase orders. Therefore, the Property System will be faced with more manual processes in acquiring the data to complete a property record for an item acquired under contract.

Page 15. Step 1. You state that the potential process is that “the new system should help catch mis-classified purchases before the data enters the financial systems,” but what is the process?

The process must be that the Property Office reviews the procurement before the obligation is finalized. This will require the cooperation of the CAMS Procurement community to ensure that Property is in the review process on all CD-435's. It will also require the continuing cooperation of the Finance community who process bankcards to make certain that Property is consulted before accounting is assigned to bankcard purchases.

Step 3. The Potential Process could be clarified.

Hopefully interfaces can be established between Property and the Core Finance System such that when Property makes a change to a property record that affects the Finance records, the Finance system is automatically updated with minimum human interaction.

Page 16 - Step 4. How? Companies will get paid regardless of Unreconciled Property.

Hopefully the concept of a bucket to accumulate costs for property as I outlined above will be a methodology that will work. (See my response to Beth McCandless and Violet Legette above.)

Page 19 - Step 5. A CD-509 should still be needed. . . .nothing like signatures

There must be a way for a gaining PC to acknowledge receipt of transferred property. However, it is possible to use electronic signatures or other methodologies to accomplish this.

Page 21 - Step 1. How else do you gather information from a PC if not manually?

If you are excessing accountable property, much of the information about the property will be available in the PPS. It should be possible to simply transfer this information to an excess report. The system must be designed to ensure that the information needed is in the system. In the case of non-accountable property, the information will not be in the PPS and will need to be gathered and entered manually.

Is facility being phased out of handling personal property? If RPM's are going to be doing everything what will Personal Property Branch role be?

The term RPM in this paper is not used consistently. This has been corrected, and the term Property Office is used instead to make it clear that we are not just talking about the Property Offices in the Administrative Support Centers, but employees of the Property Offices nationwide.