FBMS Implementation Telecast Transcript

Q & A Segment #2

>> T. Garrett: Now, we would again like to invite your questions and comments.

So, please give us a call or send us a fax or email if you have an issue or question that would you like to raise.

In the meantime, Mike, one question that may have come up from that presentation is on the subject of mission essential travel.

How does an employee determine whether a proposed travel is mission essential?

>> M. Ferguson: Well, that was one of the things that we talked the ELT at some length, and you know, we actually took a stab at defining what mission critical was, and then we realized we would probably be more effective letting the individual state directors and assistant directors make that determination.

I should point out that one person I think really did an outstanding job of trying to sort through that was Don sharpio here at the training center.

They took a hard look at the travel and training that was scheduled for the first quarter, and were able to cut it back by 50% just by deferring some of those trainings.

Most of the state directors felt like they could do the same thing, if leaving it to their judgment, that they could reduce the first quarter travel by as much as 50%.

If we all do that, we'll have a much easier time getting through the fall.

>> T. Garrett: All right.

We have a couple of questions that came in from our viewers in the last few minutes.

So, we'll look at in our email in-box and Jeanette in Denver this is one we may toss to you.

From Eric in California, Eric's question is -- you referenced deployment 4 and deployment 5 of FBMS.

How many are there, and when do we expect to finish deployment?

Jeanette?

>> J. Callahan: Well, actually, in total there are 8 deployments.

Deployment 1 was some financial assistance deployment.

Deployment 2 was OSM and MMS, deployment 3 was OSM and MMS, they came up in two different deployments.

BLM is going to do the same.

We're going to come up -- well, we are coming up in deployment 4, with the large, huge -- largest percentage of our functionality, and then some of that additional functionality is planned to come up in deployment 5.

USGS will be coming up as well.

In deployment 5.

Then it goes from there with the other departmental bureaus coming up in succession through deployment 6, 7, and 8.

So, there's one deployment a year.

So, at this deployment coming up in 2009, then I think the last one would fall into 2012.

>> T. Garrett: Okay, Eric in the state office in California, thanks for submitting that question.

This question comes from Kimber in Las Vegas field office.

We have many large scale projects anticipated subject to cost recovery regulations.

How will we establish cost recovery accounts during the blackout?

Mike, can you address that?

>> M. Ferguson: Well, I think Jeanette may be more able to take the technical aspects of it, but as far as setting up the accounts, and during the blackout period, you know, we should be able to get things established.

The real issue with the blackout period is actually conducting the financial transaction and

making the payments.

And Jeanette, do you have anything to add to that?

>> J. Callahan: Well, yeah.

We have had that question before, and I don't think that we have a final answer to it yet.

We're still working on some of the details of that, so that's going to be one of those things -- stay tuned.

More to come.

>> T. Garrett: All right.

Kimber in Las Vegas thanks for that question.

Let's go to the phones and talk a call from Bob in California.

Are you on the line, Bob?

>> Caller: Yes.

>> T. Garrett: What is your question for the panel?

>> Caller: Yes.

I heard about the deployment 5 for commitment accounting.

I was just wondering how do we keep track of all of those requisitions that have been pushed starting 1st October.

Not like before where we had the ideas, and we could keep track of it by MIS.

>> T. Garrett: We'll go to Jeanette, the national operations center in Denver.

Jeanette, you can address that question from Bob?

>> J. Callahan: Well, that is a concern, because we don't want to overspend.

If we don't have commitment accounting to us, that's a possibility.

So, folks are used to using commitment accounting, or most of them are, so it's going to be a policy decision on how we're going to handle this bureau-wide.

But I think that probably we may be looking at something like cuff records for this year but

again, final decisions on that are -- or final policies have not come out yet, so again, stay tuned, more to come.

I'm sorry that we're having so many things that are coming later, but it's sort of the way this project is going.

There's a lot of things that we don't know yet about the FBMS system, and we're learning as we go.

>> Caller: Thank you.

>> T. Garrett: All right, Bob, thank you for that question.

>> Caller: Appreciate it.

>> T. Garrett: Stand by for more information.

You know, Mike, we have had in BLM a number of major initiatives before and some just don't pan out as hoped or planned, and that's really the case with all agencies and many in the private sector.

For us, Har mars being one example of that.

What is different in this case that gives as you higher level of confidence?

>> M. Ferguson: Well, Tony, there's actually one huge difference with FBMS that we didn't have with ALMERS that actually gives me a much higher level of comfort.

That is that we have a third party independent contractor reviewing our readiness at various steps in getting ready to deploy FBMS.

At each step, they do an analysis of the each step, of what information we have provide, how much progress the contractor has made, whether or not we are ready or making progress on the test, what are the test results and they make a recommendation to Nina on whether or not we proceed to the next step.

Again, they're an independent third party, and if they determine we are not ready to go, and it won't work when we turn the key, they're going to suggest to Nina that maybe we hold up and

delay.

We didn't have that with ALMERS.

It was real easy to get caught up in, you know, the same kind of mindset with the challenger disaster where it's kind of a group think thing.

So, we have got some protection against that this time.

>> J. Dougan: Mike, don't you think another thing in our favor is that BLM is not in it alone.

This is a department-wide system.

It's critical to the success of the department-wide.

So, we have agencies that are already deployed, agencies that will deploy after us, and the department very much wants to help it be a success.

>> M. Ferguson: That's right, Julia.

All of those other bureaus, as well as the department are involved in the conversations.

We have weekly meetings of all of the deployed bureaus, including the bureaus who are going to deploy in future deployments.

They're all involved and they all get a vote in making the recommendation to Nina at each of those quality gates whether we go forward or not.

>> T. Garrett: All right.

Thank you.

A couple of questions in from Margie in the New Mexico site office.

First question -- Mike mentioned that gov-trip will be operational during the blackout period.

Does this mean all authorizations and travel vouchers will be created and processed during this period.

We understand that travel voucher payments will not be processed during this time but employees will be able to create their travel documents.

Does Margie have that correct?

>> J. Dougan: Well, I think she has it generally correct.

But I think Tony, we need to go back to what Mike talked about mission essential travel.

We're really asking employees to limit their travel to mission essential travel and that decision be made in conjunction with their managers.

But yes, we will be able to create authorizations and vouchers and gov-trip during that time.

But again, one of the keys to success is minimizing the number of financial transactions, including travel vouchers that we do during that period.

>> T. Garrett: A second, Mike, anything to add to that?

>> M. Ferguson: Yes, if part of the question, will we have an ability to pay those vouchers.

The answer to that is, yes, we will be making some payments.

We will be slower, and the more vouchers we get, the slower it will be.

But, it's not fair to say that we won't be paying the travel vouchers until December or January.

We will be paying them as fast as we can during the blackout period.

>> T. Garrett: Okay, now, Margie had a second question.

On the example of new FBMS code, the work breakdown structure example did not contain the period DELIMiTERS.

As an example, the old psyche project code will now be -- she gives me the numbers, if we understand this coding correctly, or do we not actually use the delimiters when coding our time?

>> J. Dougan: You know, Tony, that's then another one of those things as the FBMS applications have been developed that we're beginning to understand more.

What we do know in quicktime is you do not enter the periods.

In fact, I believe you don't see them at all.

Some of the other FBMS applications -- I myself have not had the opportunity to really put my hands on it, so Jeanette may be able to chime in, too.

I think there are times when the system itself generates the periods but they may not be viewed

by the user.

They are in the system, but they may not be viewed.

So, Jeanette, do you have anything to add to that based on what you have seen in testing?

>> J. Callahan: I believe that's correct, Julia, that in some cases the periods won't be entered or won't be shown.

>> J. Dougan: But it should be fairly obvious whether it needs to be or not?

>> J. Callahan: I think so.

>> J. Dougan: Think the general rule is probably going to be that you don't have to enter all of those periods.

That's one of the things that just really kind of developed after we put out some of the initial guidance.

So, you know, stay tuned on that, we'll try to make sure that we clarify that, and get some of the input from some of our people 0 who have been in testing so they can really tell us what and when with those delimiters.

>> T. Garrett: Thanks to Margie in the New Mexico state office for those questions.

We have a fax from Karen in Washington with a couple of more questions.

One is how will billing and setting up reimbursable accounts work?

If there are no reimbursable accounts will we start cost recovery work, EG, ROW's without that funding?

Jeanette in Denver?

>> J. Callahan: Well, I'm not sure if I understand the question.

Is the question that how will we set up reimbursable accounts without funding, or how will they work exactly?

And I know that you cannot go back and ask, so --

>> T. Garrett: Yes.

>> J. Callahan: During the blackout we won't be setting up any reimbursable accounts at all.

When we come up at go-live, there will be funding available if the funding is there, for that particular reimbursable agreement.

That will be in the system.

And in terms of the question, how will they work?

I'm not sure how to answer that.

I think that by and large, from a bigger perspective -- picker picture perspective, it will work much the same as it does now.

I'm not sure exactly what the question was.

>> T. Garrett: All right.

>> J. Callahan: However, if that -- whoever sent in that question would like more information, just have her send me an email and we'll try to get an answer for her.

>> T. Garrett: Okay.

Please do that, Karen, in Washington.

We'll get a more precise answer for you, if there is one available at this time.

But Karen's second question was how and when will LR-2000 RAS, FAMS, et cetera, be linked to FBMS?

>> J. Dougan: Jeanette, did you hear that question.

Those are talking about some of our legacy systems, LR-2000, Sams, et cetera.

Can you speak to how those relate to FBMS?

>> J. Callahan: Yes.

Like for example, with the LR-2000, that interface is through CBS.

That won't change.

That will continue to be the same.

>> T. Garrett: All right.

We talked about some of the systems that are going away.

What kind of thought has been given to keeping some of these on standby just in case?

Mike.

>> M. Ferguson: Well, we have actually talked about that quite a bit.

You know, we have to kind of evaluate the cost of keeping systems up and available versus the risk of not having a contingency plan.

That's actually what led us to request the department to let us bring up FFS in a limited fashion.

There are some others that we're considering, and talking about keeping up and running just as kind of an insurance policy.

We haven't made a decision on all of those, but again, you know, we're trying to kind of balance the level of risk with the cost.

>> T. Garrett: Thank you, Mike.

You know, sometimes it's not easy to make the connection between a complex business and fiscal system.

And the end impact that that modernization has on the work that BLMers do on the ground.

So, I'd like to ask both of you and Jeanette, if you'd like to also address this, and that is how do we connect the dots for those who may have difficulty understanding how this means more money on the ground, as you have said, Mike?

>> J. Dougan: Well, I think one of the ways is what Mike was just talking about.

All of our what we call legacy systems that will go away.

Department-wide, I think there's more than 80 that will go away.

A significant number for BLM will go away.

All of those systems cost money to maintain, to people to maintain, and what when that goes away, hopefully, that will free up some of that funding.

Now, you know, I think it is hard for people to see, you know, that this much goes away here and

ends up right in this bucket in their wildlife management project.

But along with the managing for excellence initiative, that's really our whole goal here.

Is to reduce the amount of funding that has to go to overhead and processing.

And put that more to on the ground work wherever possible.

But I think it will take a few years to sort that out, because watching any new system takes extra effort.

For a while.

There's no doubt in that.

But I think eventually, we will be able to really streamline our business processes.

>> T. Garrett: Mike.

>> M. Ferguson: Yeah.

I would caution people to not think, oh, boy, we're going to get a whole bunch of new money when we convert to FBMS.

I think people understand budget trends lately, what's happening with the federal budget overall, and we don't truly expect to have significant increases, in fact our budget, if figure, is going to be flat or declining.

So, the question then becomes how do we maintain our capability.

And so, it's an attempt to improve some efficiency in order to keep up with our mission critical mission related on the ground work in spite of flatter or declining budgets.

>> T. Garrett: Okay.

Jeanette in Denver, do you have a lot of direct contact particularly through the train thank you are coordinating and that sort of thing with the people who will be key to the success of the implementation, and operation of FBMS.

Do you get a sense that they appreciate generally and understand generally the long term benefits and the imperatives of this kind of modernization?

>> J. Callahan: I think so.

We have to do something, because FFS is going to go away.

And FBMS, the combination of FBMS, is a modern, integrated system, and essentially, if you have to do something, then it makes sense to move to a commercial, over-the-shelf integrated system.

>> T. Garrett: All right.

Thank you.