



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PETROLEUM GEOLOGISTS  
Geoscience & Energy Office – Washington, D.C.

Written testimony submitted to:  
**Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies**  
in support of U.S. Geological Survey programs

by

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To the Chair and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG) about the importance of the geological programs conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

AAPG, an international geoscience organization, is the world's largest professional geological society representing over 33,000 members. The purpose of AAPG is to advance the science of geology, foster scientific research, promote technology and advance the well-being of its members. With members in 116 countries, more than two-thirds of whom work and reside in the United States, AAPG serves as a voice for the shared interests of energy geologists and geophysicists in our profession worldwide. Included among its members are numerous CEOs, managers, directors, independent/consulting geoscientists, federal and State regulators, educators, researchers and students.

AAPG strives to increase public awareness of the crucial role that the geosciences, and particularly petroleum geology, play in our society. The USGS is crucial to meeting these societal needs, and several of its programs deserve special attention by the Subcommittee.

### **Geologic Resource Assessments**

#### *Energy Resources Program*

The USGS Energy Resources Program (ERP) conducts both basic and applied geoscience research focused on geologic energy resources (both domestic and international), including oil, natural gas, coal, coalbed methane, gas hydrates, geothermal, oil shale, and bitumen and heavy oil. ERP also conducts research on the environmental, economic, and human health impacts of the production and use of these resources. This research provides both the public and private sectors with vital information.

An urgent problem that the ERP is currently working on is the **preservation of geological and geophysical data**. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPACT 2005, P.L. 109-58) includes Sect. 351 Preservation of Geological and Geophysical Data. This program is designed to preserve

geological, geophysical data, and engineering data, maps, well logs, and samples. It further envisages creating a national catalog of this archival material, and providing technical and financial assistance related to the archival material. As the Act stipulated, the USGS has developed a plan to conduct this program, and is ready to go. It awaits sufficient appropriated funds to achieve the goals and objectives set forth in EPACT 2005.

Why is preservation important? Responsible management and efficient development of natural resources requires access to the best available scientific information. Over many years industry, such as petroleum and mining companies, has invested billions of dollars to acquire geological and geophysical data. Because of changing company focus and economic conditions this data may no longer have value to the company that acquired it, and is in jeopardy of being discarded.

But this data still has value to society. The data is valuable for further natural resources exploration and development, and can be applied to basic and applied earth systems research, environmental remediation, and natural-hazard mitigation. It is the type of data that will enable future generations of scientists and policy makers to address the nation's energy, environmental, and natural-hazard challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The EPACT 2005 Sect. 351 program was authorized at \$30 million from FY2006 through FY2010. The FY2008 allocation for this program is \$1 million, just over 3% of authorized levels. Funding for previous fiscal years was even lower. These funding levels are insufficient to achieve this program's objectives.

**AAPG urges the Subcommittee to fund existing Energy Resources Program activities at a minimum level of \$26.6 million as the Administration requested, and to additionally appropriate \$30 million authorized by EPACT 2005 for the preservation of geological and geophysical data, bringing the total Energy Resource Program budget to at least \$56.6 million.**

#### *Mineral Resources Program*

The USGS Mineral Resources Program (MRP) is the only federal source for comprehensive information and analysis of mineral commodities and mineral materials. The United States is the world's largest consumer of mineral commodities, and processed materials of mineral origin accounted for over \$575 billion of the U.S. economy in 2007.

It is therefore essential to this nation's economic and national security that the federal government understands both the domestic and international supply and demand for minerals and mineral materials. This data is used throughout government (Departments of Commerce, Interior, Defense, and State; the Central Intelligence Agency; the Federal Reserve) and the private sector. There is no other source for this data and information.

Yet, the President's FY2009 budget request calls for a \$24.5 million cut in the MRP budget, reducing it by nearly 50%. The impact of such a dramatic reduction would be the elimination of 210 of the 334 currently occupied scientific and technical positions in the program. At a time when we are seeing dramatic growth in demand for mineral commodities, such action is unwise.

**AAPG urges the Subcommittee to reject the Administration's proposed funding cut and appropriate funds for the Mineral Resources Program at FY2005 appropriated levels of \$54 million.**

### **Geologic Landscape & Coastal Assessments**

#### *National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program*

AAPG supports the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program (NCGMP). This unique partnership between the federal and State governments and the university community further demonstrates the importance of geoscience to society. The geologic maps produced by this program are used for natural resource management, natural hazard mitigation, water resource management, environmental conservation and remediation, and land-use planning.

NCGMP deserves special commendation for its EDMAP initiative. This university partnership enables students, working in a close mentoring relationship with faculty, to produce maps while learning essential mapping skills. As such, the program delivers an immediate return on the federal investment in terms of beneficial maps, as well as a future return in the form of a trained and competent next generation workforce.

**AAPG supports the President's FY2009 request for \$27.4 million for the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program, and urges the Subcommittee to consider further increases to this program.**

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to the Subcommittee. And thank you for your leadership and support for the geosciences. As you deliberate appropriate funding levels for these USGS programs, please consider the important public policy implications these choices entail.

If you would like additional information for the record, please contact me at AAPG's Geoscience and Energy Office – Washington, D.C. at 202-684-8225, fax 703-379-7563, or 4220 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22302.