



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

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

by

**David G. Rensink**, President  
American Association of Petroleum Geologists

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 is the world's largest scientific and professional geological association. The purpose of the association is to advance the science of geology, foster scientific research, and promote technology. AAPG has nearly 34,000 members around the world, with roughly two-thirds living and working in the United States. These are the professional geoscientists in industry, government, and academia who practice, regulate, and teach the science and process of finding and producing energy resources from the Earth.

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, methane 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.

The President's FY2012 budget request reduces ERP's energy resources activities by \$2 million. AAPG does not support this reduction. The President's request also includes \$3 million for ERP to participate in the New Energy Frontier (wind) initiative. If Congress wishes to fund the New Energy Frontiers initiative, it should provide supplemental funds to do so.

**AAPG encourages the subcommittee to fund the Energy Resources Program activities at \$27.3 million, and provide an additional \$3 million to fund ERP's participation in the New Energy Frontier initiative if Congress chooses to fund this activity.**

#### *Mineral Resources Program*

The United States is the world's largest consumer of mineral commodities. They form the building blocks of our economy.

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.

The USGS Mineral Resources Program (MRP) is the only federal and publicly-available source for comprehensive information and analysis of mineral commodities and mineral materials. Yet, the President has proposed reducing this program's funding by 18% to \$44.2 million. AAPG does not support this reduction.

**AAPG encourages the Subcommittee to fund the Mineral Resources Program at \$53.7 million, equal to FY2010 appropriated levels.**

#### **Core Science Systems**

##### *National Geologic and Geophysical Data Preservation Program*

The National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program (NGGDPP) was authorized in Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPACT 2005, P.L. 109-58) Sect. 351. The program is designed to **preserve geological, geophysical data, and engineering data, maps, well logs, and samples**. It includes development of a national catalog of this archival material, and providing technical and financial assistance related to the samples and materials.

NGGDPP is a cost-shared partnership between the state geological surveys and the USGS. It was authorized for \$30 million annually, but since inception has received insufficient funding to accomplish all of the objectives set out in the authorizing language.

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 these data may no longer have value to the company that acquired it, and is in jeopardy of being discarded.

But these data still has value to society and the state geological surveys have stepped in to preserve it. These data are valuable for further natural resources exploration and development, management of water resources, carbon sequestration research, 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 in the years ahead.

Historical allocations for this program have ranged from \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 per year. These funding levels are inadequate to achieve the program's objectives.

**AAPG encourages the Subcommittee to appropriate at least \$1 million in FY2012 for the preservation of geological and geophysical data, and consider higher funding levels.**

### **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 encourages the Subcommittee to fund the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program at a minimum of FY2010 levels of \$28.2 million.**

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.

Please contact me through our local office at 202-684-8225, fax 703-379-7563, or 4220 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22302.