



THE AEG INSIDER

Geoscience Policy Monthly Review

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July 2013

Budget

- [House and Senate Appropriations Committees pass respective Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies appropriations bills](#) - This July, the Appropriations Committees for both the House and Senate passed their fiscal year (FY) 2014 appropriations bills for their Subcommittees on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS).
- [House Appropriations Committee releases Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill](#) - The House Committee on Appropriations published their fiscal year (FY) 2014 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill this July. The [bill](#) met with strong opposition from House Democrats, who lambasted cuts that zero out approximately 20 programs and slash 34% from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) budget.

Energy

- [Draft Advanced Fossil Energy Solicitation](#) - The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) held a series of public scoping meetings across the U.S. regarding the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to analyze the impacts of geological and geophysical activity in the Gulf of Mexico.
- [DOE releases 2013 Annual Plan for Ultra-Deepwater and Unconventional Natural Gas and Other Petroleum Resources Research and Development](#) - The DOE Office of Fossil Energy has released the Ultra-Deepwater and Unconventional Natural Gas and Other Petroleum Resources Research and Development Program [2013 Annual Plan](#).
- [New study indicates "peak oil" driven by demand, not supply](#) - Researchers from Stanford University and the University of California-Santa Cruz have released a [study](#) that provides a new perspective on the future of Earth's oil supply. The study concludes that the demand for oil, rather than the supply, will reach a peak and then begin to decline.

- [Energy efficiency bill revised and reintroduced as vote looms](#) - Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Rob Portman (R-OH) recently revised their energy efficiency legislation, the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act of 2013 ([S. 761](#)), in response to concerns that the original bill would not successfully pass the Senate.

Environment

- [CRS report on changes in the Arctic](#) - Prompted by concerns over diminishing sea ice, the report addresses the effects of increased human activity in the Arctic. Although the withdrawal of sea ice raises concerns about climate change, it also provides new opportunities for oil, gas, and mineral resources, trade routes, tourism, and other activities while raising issues of national security.

Federal Agencies & Administration

- [DOI and USDA announce partnership to protect watersheds from wildfire impacts](#) - The Department of the Interior's (DOI) Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service announced a partnership to restore forestlands around important watersheds and prevent damaging wildfires.
- [McCarthy confirmation clears Senate](#) - After months of indignation and stand-offs between Senate Democrats and Republicans, Gina McCarthy has been confirmed as the new Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in a 59 to 40 vote this July.

Natural Hazards

- [House subcommittee holds markup of the Weather Forecasting and Improvement Act of 2013](#) - For each fiscal year from 2014 through 2017 the bill would authorize \$80 million for weather laboratories and cooperative institutes, \$20 million for weather and air chemistry research, and \$20 million for a joint technology transfer initiative.
- [House committee holds hearing on wildfires](#) - The House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation held an oversight [hearing](#) on wildfire and forest management on July 11, 2013. The hearing focused on the need for active forest management, which includes both timber sales and prescribed burns, to reduce the fuel available to wildfires.
- [DOE report on U.S. energy sector vulnerabilities to climate change and extreme weather](#) - The Department of Energy updated a [report](#) as part of the Administration's efforts to support national climate change adaptation planning and to promote energy security. The report examines the impacts of climate change and extreme weather on the U.S. energy sector and identifies activities underway to address these challenges as well as potential opportunities to enhance energy technologies.
- [Distant quakes trigger tremors at U.S. waste-injection sites](#) - A recent [study](#) done by Columbia University and the University of Oklahoma published in the 12 July 2013 issue of *Science* suggests that large (magnitude 7 or above) earthquakes from all over the globe can trigger smaller quakes at waste fluid injection sites where pressure from the fluids has pushed faults close to failure.

- [EIA interactive map shows energy structures potentially impacted by storms](#) - The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) has released several interactive maps that combine real-time data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) [Hurricane Center](#) with maps showing the nation's energy infrastructure and resources.
- [New USGS reports on coastal change help community and emergency planners](#) - The United States Geological Survey (USGS) examined the probability of hurricane-induced coastal change on sandy beaches from Florida to New York in two first-ever studies released at the beginning of the month.

Natural Resources

- [House Natural Resources Committee examines U.S. helium production](#) - On June 11, 2013, the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held an oversight hearing to discuss the future of helium production in the U.S. The subcommittee heard testimony regarding the current and future U.S. demand for helium, the Federal Helium Reserve, and permitting for helium production.
- [House scheduled to consider critical minerals legislation](#) - House lawmakers must wait to consider legislation that intends to streamline hardrock mine permitting on federal lands. Introduced by Representative Mark Amodei (R-NV) in February, the National Strategic and Critical Minerals Act of 2013 ([H.R. 761](#)) hopes to increase domestic production of critical and strategic minerals on federal lands by setting permitting and litigation time limits on proposed mining projects, and establishing a lead permitting agency to increase efficiency.
- [USGS report highlights important areas for mineral investment in Afghanistan](#) - USGS scientists have [identified](#) five new areas of interest (AOI) and two subareas, adding to a list of 24 areas of interest identified in a 2011 study titled, "*Summaries and Data Packages of Important Areas for Mineral Investment and Production Opportunities of Nonfuel Minerals in Afghanistan.*"

Space

- [House committee holds markup of the NASA Authorization Act of 2013](#) - the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee held a [markup](#) of the NASA Authorization Act of 2013 ([H.R. 2687](#)). The bill, which reauthorizes programs at NASA for two years with a top line budget of \$16.9 billion, was approved by a vote of 22 to 17 along party lines.
- [NASA seeks collaborative private sector partnerships](#) - NASA officials released a [synopsis](#) of their [Collaborations for Commercial Space Capabilities](#) (CCSC), a program that provides private sector companies with the opportunity to utilize NASA's resources and expertise to produce cost-effective, commercial products and services for low Earth orbit and beyond.

Water & Oceans

- [USGS develops improved technique for coral reef monitoring](#) - Coral reefs are being degraded on a global scale, and a better understanding of the factors that affect coral growth could tell us why. To this end, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has

pioneered [a new weight-based method](#) that allows for more accurate and precise measurements of coral growth.

- [NAS report on Ocean Acidification Strategic Plan](#) - The National Academies of Sciences released a report on the “[Review of the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Plan](#).” Developed as a guide for federal research, the strategic plan assesses the impacts of ocean acidification and help policymakers develop strategies for adaptation and mitigation.
- [Streamer – A new online tool to visualize and understand water flow across America](#) - Streamer is a new interactive, online map service from the United States Geological Survey and the National Atlas of the United States that allows the user to navigate America’s major rivers and streams. Interactive maps and further information can be found on the [official website](#).

[Federal Register](#) - Click [here](#) for key Federal Register notices posted this July.

Monthly Review prepared by: Maeve Boland, Geoscience Policy Director; Abby Seadler, Geoscience Policy Associate; and Brittany Huhmann, Clinton Koch, and John Kemper 2013 AIPG/AGI Summer Interns.

Sources: The American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Chemical Society, Bureau of Land Management, the Congressional Research Service, Department of Energy, Department of the Interior, Environment and Energy Daily, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Register, Fire Adapted Communities, Government Accountability Office, the House of Representatives, National Academies Press, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Atlas, National Institute of Standards and Technology, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, National Science Foundation, Politico, Science Magazine, Stanford University, Thomas, University of Hawaii at Hilo Center for the Study of Active Volcanoes, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Energy Information Administration, U.S. General Services Administration, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Government Printing Office, U.S. Senate, the White House

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