

Written testimony submitted to:  
**House 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 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 over 40,000 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.

### **Unconventional Oil and Gas Research**

#### *Multiple Programs*

As part of the effort to improve America's energy security, protect the environment, save consumers money, and maintain United States leadership in emerging energy technologies, the USGS, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have created an interagency program that aims to understand the potential environmental, health, and safety impacts of hydraulically fractured oil and gas resources.

AAPG would like to emphasize that while hydraulic fracturing technology continues to evolve, it is not a new technology and we have substantial knowledge about its impacts as well as evidence of its long-term safety. This should form the basis for any new research.

***AAPG supports the USGS budget increase in the FY 2016 President's request that will support this research effort including: resource assessments and characterization; water quality; and water availability—areas of USGS scientific leadership. AAPG does not support proposed funding for Contaminants Biology. Collection of human health data is the responsibility of the EPA, as outlined in the Interagency Unconventional oil and gas strategy.***

## **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.

### ***AAPG supports the President's FY 2016 request for the Energy Resources Program.***

An urgent problem addressed through the ERP is the **preservation of geological and geophysical data**, engineering data, maps, well logs, and samples. This effort has never been funded at the authorized level, \$30 million/year. This financial neglect is compounded by the difficult financial situations facing state geological surveys that are responsible for preserving most of the country's subsurface data.

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.

For example, this data has been essential to the development of oil and gas from shales. Geoscientists require previously acquired subsurface cores and samples to identify prospective natural gas deposits that were bypassed before new technology made shale resources economically producible.

The NCGDPP was authorized at \$30 million annually in EPACT 2005. Historical allocations for this program have ranged from \$750,000 to \$1,332,345 per year. These funding levels are inadequate to achieve the program's objectives. Furthermore, with the precipitous decline in oil prices some companies may go out of business or cease operations in a particular region. This could lead to additional obligations on public, primarily state, repositories.

### ***AAPG supports the reauthorization of the Preservation of the Geological and Geophysical Data Program and recommends that the Subcommittee appropriate an additional \$5 million in FY 2016 for the preservation of geological and geophysical data.***

### *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 the 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.

***AAPG supports the President's FY 2016 request for the Mineral Resources Program.***

*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 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 funding request of \$25.3 million for the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program, including increases for Coastal Resilience and Landscapes and Sinkhole Hazards.***

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to the Subcommittee. AAPG also appreciates 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 have any questions about AAPG or this testimony, please contact Edith Allison, the director of our policy office in Alexandria (phone: 202-643-6533, email: eallison@aapg.org).