Testimony of the USGS Coalition
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Regarding the U.S. Geological Survey FY2027 Budget
To the
House/Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
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The USGS Coalition—representing an alliance of more than 80 scientific societies, universities, businesses, conservation organizations, and natural resource managers—appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony on FY2027 appropriations for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The President's FY2027 budget proposes $892.7 million for USGS, a reduction of $527.8 million (37 percent) from the $1.42 billion Congress enacted in FY2026 and the largest proposed single-year cut in the agency's 147-year history. Congress reviewed a nearly identical proposed cut last year and rejected it. The Coalition urges Congress to do so again and to provide $1.85 billion for USGS in FY2027 to fulfill its mission and implement its 21st-Century Science Strategy.

USGS: Infrastructure, Not Overhead

The U.S. Geological Survey provides objective, non-regulatory scientific information that supports public safety, economic development, natural resource management, and national security across every state. Its singular value is independence: USGS has no operational stake in the outcomes its data describes, which is precisely why states, courts, insurance markets, industries, and communities trust it. Every bridge, dam, and flood control system in the United States is engineered using USGS streamgage records. Every building code incorporates USGS seismic hazard data. USGS mineral assessments inform billions of dollars in annual investment decisions. USGS is not academic overhead—it is data infrastructure that returns far more to the nation than it costs. The Landsat program alone generated an estimated $25.6 billion in economic value in 2023.

The Proposed Cuts Undermine the Administration's Own Priorities

The Administration has emphasized prioritizing critical minerals, energy dominance, and domestic resource security, which highlights why the proposed FY2027 budget is counterproductive. It increases investment in the Earth Mapping Resources Initiative (Earth MRI) while proposing a 43 percent cut to Core Science Systems, which provides the geologic mapping, 3D elevation data, and data infrastructure that Earth MRI and all mineral assessments depend on.

The National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program (NCGMP) is the backbone that makes mineral assessments possible. The budget proposes to restructure the program into a new Geology, Energy, and Minerals Mission Area (GEMMA), pulling it out of its current scientific context and severing the interdependencies that make it effective. Congress rejected this reorganization in FY2026 and should do so again. China is expanding its investment in mineral mapping, and cutting the U.S. scientific foundation for mineral assessment cedes strategic ground at exactly the wrong moment.

An Interconnected System: Cuts in One Area Degrade All Others

USGS mission areas function as an integrated scientific system, not a collection of independent line items. Cuts that appear separate in the budget create cascading harm across the whole. The Water Resources streamgage network provides the primary data for Natural Hazards flood forecasting; cutting one degrades the other. Core Science Systems, including geologic mapping, Landsat satellite data, and the 3D Elevation Program underpin mineral assessments, hazard modeling, infrastructure planning, and emergency response. A 43 percent cut would ripple across every program that depends on these capabilities.

The proposed elimination of the Ecosystems Mission Area would end wildlife disease surveillance, including avian influenza and chronic wasting disease, as well as invasive species monitoring and PFAS and other contaminant tracking in private drinking water wells. It would also eliminate the Cooperative Research Unit program based at land-grant universities in 41 states, removing both federal scientific capacity and constituent research funding in districts

nationwide. The proposed 32 percent cut to the Natural Hazards Mission Area would degrade earthquake, volcano, and landslide monitoring at a time when disaster costs continue to rise. Annual U.S. earthquake losses alone are estimated at $14.7 billion.

The Coalition acknowledges the FY2027 budget's proposed increases to the Federal Priority Streamgage network and Cooperative Matching Funds. These are welcome, but they do not offset the overall reduction in Water Resources, the elimination of Ecosystems, or the cascading impacts of cuts to Core Science Systems. The Coalition urges Congress to sustain all mission areas at levels that preserve the integrity of this integrated enterprise.

National Security, Public Safety, and Economic Productivity

USGS is directly embedded in national security infrastructure. It is the authoritative federal source for critical mineral assessments and global supply chain analysis that inform defense procurement and semiconductor policy. USGS seismic networks support arms control treaty verification, and its hazard assessments guide the siting and protection of military installations and energy facilities. USGS ecosystem scientists also conduct frontline surveillance for H5N1 avian influenza and other zoonotic diseases, a key national security function.

More than 43 million Americans who rely on private wells not regulated by the Safe Drinking Water Act depend on USGS as their only federal source of contaminant monitoring. The USGS streamgage network returns $1.40 in flood savings for every $1 invested and supports FEMA flood insurance maps that determine homeowner premiums nationwide. Irrigated farms using USGS water data produce more than half of all U.S. crop value. When monitoring is degraded, irrigation becomes less efficient, yields decline, and food prices rise.

The outdoor recreation economy, which generates more than $1.1 trillion annually, depends on the ecosystem health data USGS provides. These are not abstractions. They are daily economic and safety realities for communities across the country.

Two Additional Concerns for the Subcommittee and the Committee

The FY2027 Department of the Interior budget includes a provision titled "Interior Authority for Operating Efficiencies" that may grant the Secretary of the Interior broad authority to reorganize DOI bureaus administratively without explicit congressional authorization, which has historically been required for structural changes of this scale. Even if the appropriations process results in favorable funding levels, this provision could allow the Administration to restructure USGS without congressional approval. The Coalition urges the Subcommittee to carefully scrutinize this language.

The FY2027 budget also proposes reducing USGS staffing by 1,905 FTE, representing a 28 percent cut on top of recent Reduction in Force (RIF) decisions. USGS expertise in fields such as seismology, volcanology, hydrology, and mineral geology takes decades to develop, and long-term monitoring records, some dating back to the 1800s, cannot be reconstructed once interrupted. Restoring funding in a future year will not recover the scientific capacity lost in the interim. Prevention is the only effective strategy.

USGS programs are not independent line items. They form an integrated system, and the FY2027 budget would cut it by 37 percent, eliminate a mission area for the first time, restructure programs in ways that break scientific interdependencies, and allow further changes without congressional authorization. This is not focus; it is fragmentation of infrastructure that communities, industries, and national security rely on every day.

The USGS Coalition urges Congress to provide $1.85 billion for the U.S. Geological Survey in FY2027, preserve the Ecosystems Mission Area, reject the GEMMA reorganization, and carefully scrutinize the "Interior Authority for Operating Efficiencies" provision. We stand ready to support the Subcommittee and provide additional information as needed.

Thank you for your consideration.