National Council for Science and the Environment

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Testimony of the
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT
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To the
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies

Regarding the
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
FY 2004 Budget Request

April 3, 2003

Summary

The National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE) urges Congress to appropriate $959.7 million for the U.S. Geological Survey in FY 2004, an increase of 4.4 percent over the FY 2003 enacted level of $919.3 million (Table 1). Our national interests will be served if Congress provides adequate resources for the USGS to fulfill its mission, including its critical role in homeland security. NCSE supports increased federal investment in USGS programs that underpin responsible natural resource stewardship, improve resilience to natural and human-induced hazards, and contribute to the long-term health, security, and prosperity of the nation. A 4.4 percent increase in the USGS budget in FY 2004 would provide new funding to support the agency's responsibilities related to homeland security and other priorities and support an adjustment that accounts for inflation and uncontrollable costs.

NCSE is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has been working since 1990 to improve the scientific basis for environmental decisionmaking. Our work is endorsed by nearly 500 organizations, ranging from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to the Sierra Club, including the National Association of Attorneys General, National Association of Counties, some 300 colleges and universities, and more than 80 scientific and professional societies. As a neutral science-based organization, NCSE promotes science and its relationship with decisionmaking but does not take positions on environmental issues themselves.

The National Council for Science and the Environment thanks the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies for the opportunity to provide testimony on the U.S. Geological Survey budget request for FY 2004.

Federal Investments in R&D

Federal investments in R&D and science education are essential to the future well-being and prosperity of the nation and deserve the highest priority of Congress. The long-term prosperity of the nation and the maintenance of our quality of life depend on a steady and growing commitment of federal resources to science and technology.

The U.S. Geological Survey is a critical component of the nation's R&D portfolio. NCSE supports the continued vitality of the unique combination of biological, geological, hydrological and mapping programs of the U.S. Geological Survey. The USGS provides independent, high-quality data, information, research support and assessments needed by federal, state, local and tribal policymakers, resource and emergency managers, engineers and planners, researchers and educators and the public. NCSE supports increased federal investment in USGS programs that underpin responsible natural resource stewardship, improve resilience to natural and human-induced hazards, and contribute to the long-term health, security and prosperity of the nation.

Homeland Security and the U.S. Geological Survey

The USGS has tremendous strength in areas that are critical to homeland security, such as protecting water resources and producing digital maps that are needed for assessing terrorist threats and responding to terrorist attacks. The significance of USGS research to homeland security is reflected by the fact that its report on "Source-Area Characteristics of Large Public Surface-Water Supplies in the Coterminous United States," has been withdrawn from approximately 300 federal depositories. FBI agents visited several libraries to ensure that the document was truly removed from circulation.

After September 11, the USGS provided more than 100,000 topographic maps as well as digital geospatial information and Landsat images to emergency response, law enforcement, intelligence, and defense agencies. The USGS produces a set of 55,000 topographic maps that provides the nation's only comprehensive coverage of the nation's infrastructure, including highways, bridges, dams, power plants, airports, railroads, and major buildings. The average age of the topographic maps is 23 years. The USGS National Map program would bring this asset into the 21st century. Accelerated investments in the National Map -- which involves partnerships with federal, state, and local agencies and the private sector -- will pay dividends to homeland security, economic development, natural resource management, and many other national needs.

Unlike many other federal agencies, the USGS did not receive supplemental emergency appropriations following September 11. Some of the proposed cuts in the USGS budget request are in areas related to homeland security, such as topographic mapping and research on the dispersal of toxic substances in lakes, streams, and aquifers. At a time when the federal government is allocating tens of billions of dollars for homeland security, we urge Congress to explore the role of the USGS in homeland security and counterterrorism and to provide full funding for its responsibilities in these critical areas.

U.S. Geological Survey Budget Request for FY 2004

The National Council for Science and the Environment urges Congress to appropriate $959.7 million for the U.S. Geological Survey in FY 2004, an increase of 4.4 percent over the FY 2003 enacted level of $919.3 million. Our national interests will be served if Congress provides adequate resources for the USGS to fulfill its mission. A 4.4 percent increase in the USGS budget in FY 2004 would provide new funding to support the agency's responsibilities related to homeland security and other priorities as well as an adjustment that accounts for inflation and uncontrollable costs.

The President's FY 2004 budget request would cut nearly every major line item in the USGS budget relative to the FY 2003 enacted level (Table 1). The budget request would cut funding for Biological Research by 0.6 percent, Geologic Hazards and Resources by 5.0 percent, Mapping, Remote Sensing and Geographic Investigations by 9.6 percent, and Water Resources by 3.4 percent. Total funding for the USGS would decrease by $24 million or 2.6 percent.

The proposed cuts would have negative impacts related to homeland security; natural hazards mitigation; water, energy, and mineral resources; invasive species; the national spatial data infrastructure; and other areas. For example, two programs that would receive disproportionate cuts are the Toxic Substances Hydrology, which would decline by 17.7 percent, and the Hydrologic Research and Development, which would decline by 10.8 percent. These programs are essential for maintaining safe and secure water resources for citizens of the United States.

NCSE greatly appreciates the Subcommittee's sustained support for the U.S. Geological Survey. We are especially grateful for the Subcommittee's leadership in restoring past cuts in the USGS budget. Thank you very much for your interest in improving the scientific basis for environmental decisionmaking.

Table 1. U.S. Geological Survey Appropriations
(budget authority in millions of dollars)

USGS Activity/Subactivity	Budget Authority ($ Millions)			Change from FY 03 Enacted to FY 04 Request	
	FY 2002[1] Actual	FY 2003[2] Enacted	FY 2004 Request	Amount ($ Millions)	Percent (%)
Mapping, Remote Sensing, & Geog. Investigations	133.1	133.2	120.5	-12.7	-9.6%
Cooperative Topographic Mapping	*81.0*	*81.1*	*74.1*	-7.0	-8.6%
Land Remote Sensing	*35.8*	*35.7*	*34.0*	-1.7	-4.7%
Geographic Analysis and Monitoring	*16.3*	*16.4*	*12.3*	-4.0	-24.7%
Geologic Hazards, Resources, and Processes	232.6	233.2	221.6	-11.6	-5.0%
Geologic Hazard Assessments	*74.9*	*75.0*	*72.8*	-2.2	-3.0%
Geologic Landscape & Coastal Assessments	*77.9*	*78.7*	*79.4*	0.7	0.9%
Geologic Resource Assessment	*79.7*	*79.5*	*69.4*	-10.1	-12.7%
Water Resources Investigations	206.4	207.2	200.1	-7.1	-3.4%
Hydrologic Monitoring, Assessm'ts & Research	*136.1*	*136.8*	*135.6*	-1.2	-0.9%
Cooperative Water Program	*64.3*	*64.4*	*64.5*	0.1	0.2%
Water Resources Research Act Program	*6.0*	*6.0*	*0.0*	-6.0	-100.0%
Biological Research	166.2	169.8	168.9	-0.9	-0.6%
Biological Research and Monitoring	*133.4*	*132.1*	*134.0*	1.9	1.4%
Biological Information Management & Delivery	*18.9*	*22.8*	*20.7*	-2.1	-9.2%
Cooperative Research Units	*14.0*	*14.9*	*14.1*	-0.8	-5.1%
Science Support	86.2	85.2	91.5	6.4	7.5%
Facilities	89.4	90.8	92.9	2.2	2.4%
TOTAL	913.9	919.3	895.5	-23.8	-2.6%

Source: *The Interior in Brief Fiscal Year 2004* and USGS.

[1] Included in the FY 2002 Actual Column are: enacted funding ($914.0 million); Across-The-Board (ATB) reduction (-$0.9 million); and transfer to Water for Cyprus Work ($0.8 million).

[2] Included in the FY 2003 Enacted column are: enacted funding ($925.3 million) and ATB reduction (-$6.0 million)