

## Monthly Review: June 2012

*The American Geosciences Institute's monthly review of geosciences and policy goes out to the leadership of AGI's member societies, members of the AGI Geoscience Policy Committee, and others as part of a continuing effort to improve communications about the role of geoscience in policy. The current monthly review and archived monthly reviews are all available online. Subscribe to receive the Geopolicy Monthly Review by email.*

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### 1. Congressional Visits Day in September – Join Us in DC

Geoscientists are invited to join us for a workshop and visits on 11-12 September in Washington DC for Geosciences Congressional Visits Day (GEO-CVD). Decision makers need to hear from geoscientists. Become a citizen geoscientist and join many of your colleagues for a workshop followed by a day conducting visits with members of Congress or congressional staff on

Capitol Hill to speak on the importance of geoscience research, development, and education.

Email [govt@agiweb.org](mailto:govt@agiweb.org) for more information or to sign-up.

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## **2. OSTP Associate Director Carl Wieman Leaves Administration**

Carl Wieman has stepped down from the position as associate director for science at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) where he focused on science education. After receiving the Nobel Prize in 2001 for the creation of the first Bose-Einstein condensate, Wieman began focusing his attention on the study of undergraduate education methods and led the Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative at the University of British Columbia (UBC) while holding a position at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

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## **3. OMB Scorecards Show Federal Agencies on Track to Meet Sustainability Goals**

On June 15, 2012, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Center for Environmental Quality (CEQ) released scorecards to evaluate federal agencies' performance in achieving goals for improved sustainability, energy efficiency, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction. The performance scorecards benchmark federal progress to meet the clean energy and sustainability goals outlined in President Obama's Executive Order 13514. Agencies will update their Sustainability Plans to address the agency-specific levels of improvement, target opportunities for progress, and build on areas of success.

Executive Order 13514 requests federal agencies to "lead by example" in environmental, energy, and economic performance. Each agency is required to develop an annual performance plan to illustrate how they will achieve a positive return on investment for American taxpayers, while meeting sustainability targets. The reduction targets required by 13514 include a 30 percent reduction in vehicle fleet petroleum use by 2020, 26 percent improvement in water efficiency by 2020, 50 percent recycling and waste diversion by 2015, GHG reductions of 28 percent for direct emissions and 13 percent for indirect emissions, implementation of the 2030 net-zero-energy building requirement, and development plans for sustainably locating federal buildings. Investments in energy efficiency within the federal government are expected to save at least \$18 billion in energy costs over the lifetime of the projects.

The OMB Sustainability/Energy Scorecards evaluate performance using seven metrics: scope one GHG emissions (direct sources) and scope 2 GHG emissions (from purchased electrical, heat, or steam generation), scope 3 GHG emissions (indirect emissions from employee commute or travel), energy intensity, renewable energy use, potable water intensity, fleet petroleum use, and sustainable building practices. Each category is classified as green, yellow, or red based on the extent to which an agency is on target with their 2011 Sustainability Plan. Additionally, scorecard results hold agencies accountable for their progress toward implementing Executive Order goals.

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## **4. Appropriations Update for June 2012**

In June, the House of Representatives debated and passed the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (H.R. 5325), the House Appropriations Committee marked up and passed the Interior and Environment Appropriations bill, and the Senate Armed Services Committee recommended a decrease in total research and development (R&D) funding in a report accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (S. 3254). The House Interior and Environment appropriations bill would only provide the United States Geological Survey (USGS) with \$967 million with significant cuts affecting the Natural Hazards program, Ecosystems, and Climate and Land Use Change.

The House Appropriations Committee marked up its Interior and Environment bill on June 27 and 28. The bill includes a 17 percent reduction for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a 10 percent reduction for the USGS. Only Water Resources Programs at the USGS would receive an increase (+\$10 million) while every other mission directorate would see decreases. Significant decreases would affect Ecosystems (-\$45.4 million), Climate and Land Use Change (-\$25.4), Core Science Systems (-\$8.1 million), Energy, Minerals and Environmental Health (-\$8.8 million), and Natural Hazards (-\$37.4 million). Amendments added during the full committee mark up would prevent the EPA from finalizing greenhouse gas regulations on cars for model years after 2017 and another would prohibit the EPA from imposing greenhouse gas regulations on electric utility plants that use fossil fuels. The final version of the bill passed the committee by a vote of 26-19. The Senate Appropriations Committee has not released its Interior and Environment spending bill.

During the first week of June, the House of Representatives continued to debate the Energy and Water Appropriations bill on the floor and several relevant amendments were considered. Amendments were offered to reduce or increase the Department of Energy Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE). Representative Randy Hultgren (R-IL) offered an amendment to transfer \$15 million from EERE to the Office of Science. The amendment failed by a vote of 130-256.

Representative Janice Hahn's (D-CA) amendment would have cut \$50 million from the Office of Fossil Energy Research and

Development (FE) and transferred another \$50 million from the same account to EERE. Hahn's amendment failed by a vote of 139-245. Several other amendments targeted FE. Representative Gerry Connolly (D-VA) offered an amendment to cut \$25 million from FE's oil shale development program and apply the savings to the spending reduction account. This amendment passed on a vote of 208-207. The House voted to pass the bill 255-165 even though the President issued a Statement of Administrative Policy which noted that he would be advised to veto the bill. The President has threatened to veto all of the House spending bills because they were written under a lower spending cap than the \$1.047 trillion agreed to in the Budget Control Act (P.L. 112-25). The Senate Armed Services Committee's defense authorization bill includes funding levels for R&D similar to the House defense authorization bill (H.R. 4310) and the President's request. In the report accompanying S. 3254, the Senate would authorize \$11.88 billion in total R&D which is slightly less than the House's recommendation of \$11.89 billion but slightly more than the administration's request of \$11.86 billion.

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#### **5. NRC Nominees Macfarlane and Svinicki Confirmed by Senate**

On June 29, the full Senate approved two nominations by President Barack Obama for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Allison Macfarlane will serve as chair of the NRC to replace outgoing chairman Gregory Jaczko. Republican Kristine Svinicki was nominated to be a commissioner for a second five-year term.

Macfarlane is an environmental science policy professor at George Mason University and served on the Blue Ribbon Commission for America's Nuclear Future (BRC). She received her Ph.D. in geology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her nomination and approval came after Jaczko announced his departure amid accusations that he was bullying NRC staff and withholding information from the commissioners. Macfarlane will serve for the remainder of Jaczko's term which will end in June 2013. At a hearing before the Committee on Environment and Public Works on June 13, Macfarlane promised to bring control to the NRC after a rocky four years under Jaczko.

Svinicki has served on the commission since 2008. She has worked as a nuclear engineer in the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy and as a professional staffer on the Senate Armed Services Committee. Some senators opposed her re-nomination because of concerns that she supports industry interests over nuclear power plant safety.

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#### **6. Senate Foreign Relations Reports Global Water Bill**

On June 19, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations passed the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2011 (S.641) without amendment. The bill would help provide access to clean and sustainable drinking water for almost one billion people worldwide. The bill is co-sponsored by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Senator Bob Corker (R-TN) and has wide bi-partisan support.

The bill would amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (P.L. 87-195) to create a Senior Advisor for Water position at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Senior Advisor for water will develop and oversee country-specific water strategies in high priority countries and give further capacity to the Department of State to address global safe water, sanitation, and integrated river basin management issues.

The bill is named after Senator Paul Simon (D-IL) who served in the Senate in the 1980s and 1990s. The bill is named for Simon because he warned about a fresh water crisis in the developing world in his book *Tapped Out: The Coming World Crisis in Water and What We Can Do About It*.

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#### **7. House Passes Broad Energy Bill**

After two full days of debating 25 amendments, the Domestic Energy and Jobs Act (H.R. 4480) passed the House on June 21, 2012. H.R. 4480 is a combination of five bills passed out of the Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Committee on Natural Resources. It was approved by a vote of 248-163, with 19 Democrats voting in favor and five Republicans voting against. The bill combines a host of provisions to streamline permitting and would delay the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) upcoming ozone standard. The measure links any drawdown of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to increases in oil and gas drilling on public lands. The White House released a Statement of Administrative Policy threatening to veto the bill, but passage through the Senate by the end of the year is unlikely.

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#### **8. Icebreaker's Dismantling Delayed, Congress Reconsiders Options**

Though initially set to be dismantled on June 18, the *Polar Sea* will remain at its Seattle port through the rest of the year. Senators Mark Begich (D-AK), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) asked Admiral Robert Papp, commandant of the Coast Guard, to hold off so the senators can attempt to fund its renovation in the fiscal year (FY) 2013 budget.

The United States owns one operational medium-duty icebreaker, the *Healy*. The *Polar Sea* and the *Polar Star* were once

operational heavy-duty icebreakers but the fate of the *Polar Sea* is in flux and the *Polar Star*, currently undergoing an extensive retrofit, will not be available until 2014. Begich, Murkowski, and Cantwell have introduced the Preserve Our Large Arctic Response Capability Act of 2011 (S. 1620) to delay the decommissioning of either heavy-duty icebreaker until a business case analysis for replacing or performing service life extensions has been completed. Senator Cantwell attached an amendment to the Coast Guard Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013 (S. 1665) which would require the Coast Guard to stop the decommissioning of the *Polar Sea*. This bill has passed the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and awaits full consideration on the Senate floor.

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## **9. Court Upholds EPA Emission Rules**

On June 26, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) greenhouse gas (GHG) emission regulations under the Clean Air Act (P.L.101-549). The case, *Coalition for Responsible Regulation, Inc., Et Al. v. Environmental Protection Agency* was argued in late February 2012 and decided on June 26, 2012.

Petitions challenging the timing rule, which set standards for stationary emitters, and the tailoring rule, which requires major polluters to obtain permits for GHG emissions, were dismissed by the court. One petition challenged the finding that greenhouse gases are hazardous to human health, referred to as the "endangerment finding," and another challenged the "tailpipe" rules, which set emissions standards for automobiles.

The endangerment finding resulted from the Supreme Court's 2007 *Massachusetts v. EPA* ruling which found that GHG could be regulated under the Clean Air Act. The court's rulings on the other petitions were influenced by the precedent of this case as well.

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## **10. NASA Gets Two Intelligence Telescopes from Military**

The National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) donated two telescopes, with 2.4-meter mirrors and 100 times the field of view of the Hubble Space Telescope, to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The NRO, a government agency responsible for controlling American spy satellites, claimed the telescopes no longer served intelligence-collection uses.

Unlike civilian space telescopes, the spy telescopes have a maneuverable secondary mirror that collects more focused images and are capable of holding a broader set of instruments. The state-of-the-art design of the new telescopes would upgrade the capability of NASA's Wide-Field Infrared Survey Telescope (WFIRST) project, which has experienced cutbacks due to funneling of resources into the \$9 billion James Webb Space Telescope (JWST). The JWST will orbit one million miles from Earth and record data on the mid-infrared portions of the electromagnetic spectrum. In addition to JWST, NASA is now equipped with two additional instruments capable of replacing the Hubble Space Telescope, which is projected to expire within the next few years. Even though characterized as "space qualified," the new telescopes will require additional cameras and other optic instruments, as well as a scientific program, data analysis resources, and a support staff, before they can be utilized as functioning space telescopes. Although NASA estimates the telescopes could reduce future mission costs by \$250 million, the funding necessary to launch one of the new telescopes is not in place. Due to tight budgetary restrictions, it may be at least 12 years before the new satellites begin operating.

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## **11. BLM Extends Comment Period for Hydraulic Fracturing Rule**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has announced an extension of the public comment period for the proposed hydraulic fracturing rules. The rule would require disclosure of chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process on federal and Indian lands. Currently, there are no required regulations for these lands. Originally, the comment period was supposed to close July 10 but is now set to close on September 10, 2012.

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## **12. USGS Releases Groundwater Quality Trends for 1998-2010**

On May 30, the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) National Water-Quality Assessment (NAWQA) Program released the latest groundwater quality trends for 1998-2010. The report showed concentrations of nitrate, chloride and other dissolved solids sampled across the country. NAWQA reported that while concentrations met the guidelines for drinking water set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), pollutant concentrations have increased since the 1990s at most sites.

The report includes an interactive map which displays the change in nitrate, chloride and dissolved solid concentrations in groundwater at 56 testing sites (54 were tested for dissolved solids) between 1998 and 2010. Almost all sites that underwent a significant change in groundwater content saw an increase in pollutant concentration as large as 50 milligrams per liter. The map shows the aquifer types for the different sites surveyed across the U.S.

At eight groundwater study sites, NAWQA investigated potential factors affecting the trend such as improved methods of



geochemical dating, contaminant degradation rates, contaminant distribution and reduction-oxidation conditions related to dissolved organic carbon. Dating groundwater-recharge was found to be one of the most important factors in determining groundwater-quality trends.

NAWQA projected groundwater-quality trends as part of the report. A publications page is included with projects cited in the report as well as statistical methods and ecosystem reports from 2008 by the Heinz Center and EPA.

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### **13. Accelerating Sea Level Rise Along U.S. Atlantic Coast**

The rate of sea level rise (SLR) is occurring three to four times higher than the global average along the Atlantic coast stretching from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina to Boston, Massachusetts according to research done by scientists at the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and published on June 24 in *Nature Climate Change*. Global SLR is currently increasing at a rate of 0.6 to 1.0 millimeters per year, whereas the Atlantic “hotspot” rate of increase is 2 to 3.7 millimeters per year. This accelerated rate is estimated to yield an 8 to 11.4 inch sea level increase by 2100 along the U.S. Atlantic Coast.

Estimates in the report were made using the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on emissions scenarios, tide gage records, global positioning system measurements of vertical land motion, and satellite measurements of ice melt. Changes in sea level along the hotspot are affected by a number of variables including global temperature rise, decrease in ocean water density from ice melt, strength of the gyre system, aerosols in the atmosphere, and the slowdown of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Current. In addition to global climate patterns, local oceanographic and atmospheric conditions can affect the magnitude of sea level rise projections and the associated level of uncertainty.

Sea level rise impacts communities by increasing coastal vulnerability to storm surges, intensifying flooding events, and making beaches and wetlands susceptible to deterioration. Research and models show that rates of SLR will continue to increase if global temperatures continue to rise. The USGS researchers suggest the sea level projections outlined in the report should be considered when planning for future coastal development along the Atlantic coast.

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### **14. Landsat Program Update**

According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the multispectral scanner (MSS) aboard Landsat 5 has been powered back after more than a decade of inactivity and is operating in test mode. Its other data collection instrument, the thematic mapper (TM), experienced an electronic malfunction in November 2011 and flight engineers will only attempt to use it over specific sensor-calibration sites before it completely fails. Landsat 7 was moved out of its normal orbit in late April to avoid a piece of space debris but on June 5, was back in its operating orbit.

The two satellites are operating well past their expected lifespan at reduced capacity. In 2003, Landsat 7 experienced a hardware failure and that continues to cause a 22 percent loss of data in every image it captures. Landsat 8, or the Landsat Data Continuity Mission, is expected to launch in January 2013. Details on the Landsat Program can be found on the USGS Landsat Missions web site or the NASA Landsat Program web site.

On July 23, the USGS and NASA will recognize the 40th anniversary of the launch of Landsat 1 in 1972. Landsat observations have helped to understand natural hazards, land use patterns, ecosystem changes, agricultural systems and many other issues of societal relevance.

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### **15. NSF Reports Merit Review Process for FY 2011**

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has released a report to the National Science Board (NSB) detailing data and relevant information on its merit review process for fiscal year (FY) 2011. The report, titled “Report to the National Science Board on the National Science Foundation’s Merit Review Process,” is similar to reports from past years, providing information on NSF’s procedure for awarding research grants. The report has two main parts: the first reports data on proposals and awards and the second describes the merit review process.

The first section outlines data on funding rates, investigator demographics and information on the different types of awards funded. For FY 2011, 22 percent of 51,562 proposals were funded, compared to 23 percent of 55,542 proposals submitted in FY 2010. The Directorate for Geosciences (GEO) had the highest directorate funding rate in FY 2011 at 31 percent, though it had the lowest number of proposals with 4,267. GEO funded awards at an average of \$159,000 with a median award of \$127,000. GEO’s award statistics were very close to the overall NSF average of \$159,000 with a median of \$120,000. The Office of Polar Programs (OPP) awarded funds which averaged \$184,000 with a median of \$147,000. OPP had the highest funding rate of the offices with 44 percent, though it had the second lowest number of proposals among the offices with 689.

Female principal investigators (PIs) had their proposals funded 23 percent of the time, male PIs were funded 22 percent of the time, and minority PIs had a funding rate of 21 percent. These are the lowest funding rates for all demographics since 2004.

Funding rates for new PIs dropped to 15 percent from 17 percent last year. The definition of new PIs was changed in FY 2011; previously a new PI was considered someone who had not been a PI on any NSF-funded project. Now a PI is new even if (s)he received doctoral dissertation awards, graduate or postdoctoral fellowships, research planning grants, or conferences, symposia and workshop grants.

NSF's merit review process is used to select projects which could lead to significant intellectual merit and broad impacts.

Intellectual merit encompasses the qualifications of the reviewer, new research concepts and experiments introduced by the project and advancement of knowledge in the scientific community. Broader impacts examined include applications to technology, involvement of underrepresented groups and a project's potential effect on research and education infrastructure.

The report outlined the logistics of the merit review process. It discussed oversight mechanisms like the Committee of Visitors, the NSF advisory committees and an external contractor which examine each directorate's merit review process. The report evaluates the appeal process and the external review selection and provides information on how most proposals are reviewed in each directorate. Merit reviews are conducted either by panel, where one group reviews a proposal together, or by mail, where the proposal is mailed to individual reviewers. These reviews are blind tests, where multiple panels or individuals evaluate a proposal without knowledge of other reviewers' decisions.

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#### **16. Wendy Harrison Named EAR Division Director**

On June 22, Wendy Harrison was named the new director of the Earth Sciences Division (EAR) in the Geosciences Directorate (GEO) of the National Science Foundation (NSF). Harrison is a professor at the Colorado School of Mines where her research focuses on environmental geochemistry. As EAR director, Harrison is responsible for overseeing EAR activities such as grant proposal review, education and outreach, and large programs like EarthScope. A program director holds the position for a maximum of four years.

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#### **17. NOAA Deputy Under Secretary for Operations Named**

On June 1, Rear Admiral David Titley was named the new National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Deputy Under Secretary for Operations. Titley is responsible for operations of all NOAA programs and procedures and will serve as an advisor to NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco on policy.

Titley has been a naval officer since 1980, serving as the commander of Fleet Numerical Meteorological and Oceanographic Center, Naval Oceanography Operations Command, and Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command and as a staff member of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. He was acting assistant deputy chief of Naval Operations for Information Dominance in 2012.

Titley received a Bachelor of Science in meteorology from the Pennsylvania State University. His postgraduate studies at the Naval Postgraduate School include a Master of Science in meteorology and physical oceanography, and a Ph.D. in meteorology, where he studied tropical cyclone intensification as his dissertation.

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#### **18. Joint Ocean Commission Initiative Releases Ocean Policy Report Card 2012**

At a conference during Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW), the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (JOCI) introduced the 2012 U.S. Ocean Policy Report Card. The goals of the bi-partisan collaboration are to accelerate the pace of change and gauge progress in implementing the National Ocean Policy established in 2010 by President Obama. Although JOCI commended current efforts to advance the National Ocean Policy (NOP), overall implementation of a policy that will comprehensively manage the nation's ocean resources has fallen short of expectations.

Co-Chairs of the JOCI Leadership Council Bill Ruckelshaus, former Environmental Protection Agency Administrator, and Norman Mineta, former Secretary of Transportation, presented the grades based upon careful monitoring of ocean policy developments, analyses of coordination efforts among federal, state, and local governments, and communications with the congressional and administrative leaders responsible for implementing the NOP.

The nation was graded in five areas critical to ensuring the protection, maintenance, and restoration of ocean and coastal environments. The first category, "National Leadership and Support," was assigned a C due to reduced financial support from Congress, lack of interagency collaboration, and poor public education programming. The highest grade, an A-, was given to "Regional, State, and Local Leadership and Implementation" due to the innovative ocean initiatives demonstrated at this level despite budget limitations. "Research, Science, and Education" received a C because of the need to fully deploy the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), budget proposals to cut funding for climate change research, and the need to update the Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology's 2007 report, *Ocean Research and Priorities Plan and Implementation Strategy*. The "Funding" category received a D- because of the systemic under-funding for ocean management, science, and

education programs. The last area, “The Law of the Sea Convention” received a failing grade because the Senate has not yet ratified the treaty.

Bill Ruckelshaus, speaking for JOCI, suggested Congress put aside partisanship and recognize the tangible benefits of implementing the goals outlined by the National Ocean Policy. Effective implementation of a reformed ocean policy could enhance national security, support coastal economies and provide jobs, and improve the health of the nation’s ocean resources.

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#### **19. WHOI Calls for Protection of the Scientific Process After BP Subpoena**

A court order ruled on April 20, granted BP PLC access to internal correspondence among scientists at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI) about the magnitude of oil flow rate calculations for the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. Following this action, WHOI President Susan Avery and director of research Laurence Madin released a statement expressing the need for greater legal protections for scholars to prevent discrediting and manipulation of the scientific deliberative process. Scientists Christopher Reddy and Richard Camilli concluded that a total of 4.9 million barrels leaked from the Macondo well at a rate of 57,000 barrels per day. The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 amended the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 2701-2761) to stipulate that corporate penalties are determined by the quantity of oil spilled, which has led BP to question the determinations made by the WHOI scientists and demand over 3,500 emails and other scientific communication documents related to their research. The attorney for Reddy and Camilli attempted to convince U.S. Magistrate Sally Shushan that the scientists should be granted “scholastic privilege” and should not be required to hand over the material. Shushan determined that there is a need for the research analyses conducted during the period in which WHOI was under contract by the U.S. Coast Guard, “because there is no other source of these documents.”

Issuing legal protections for scientists has been a contested issue for many years. As expressed in the WHOI statement, researchers fear that opposing parties involved in litigation could take statements out of context and undermine scientific conclusions. The nature of the scientific process to modify, test, reject, and question findings make it vulnerable to inaccurate representation of pre-conclusive material. The WHOI fears this could force scientists to “curtail, censor, or avoid the normal deliberative process.” Some scientists disagree, stating that the court order could lead to more effective use of science in decision-making, and BP claims the legal action was “in no way an attack on science.”

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#### **20. Megacity Mayors Pledge to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

At the 2012 United Nations (U.N.) Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20), a group of megacity mayors known as the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group announced a joint effort to cut one billion metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Recognizing the possible consequences that could result from city populations, Rio+20 focused on evaluating how megacities can adapt to growing populations and curb the associated increase in emissions.

Several initiatives were launched at the conference to reach the one billion tons by 2030 goal. Current waste disposal practices pose many environmental threats and account for five percent of total greenhouse gas emissions, spread vector-borne diseases, and make cities vulnerable to natural disasters. Members of the C40 Climate Leadership Group created the “C40 Solid Waste Network” to reduce methane emissions and other associated problems through improved solid waste management in partnership with the World Bank and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (CCAC). The U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) invited cities with populations greater than 500,000 to join the Global Initiative for Resource-Efficient Cities. This program aims to reduce methane emissions, promote energy-efficient buildings, improve water-use and waste management practices, and encourage sustainable behavioral changes.

70 percent of greenhouse gas emissions and 80 percent of electricity consumption are concentrated in cities, which occupy only 2 percent of the earth’s surface. Projections that 80 percent of the world’s population will live in cities by midcentury could lead to significant increases in these values, however, increased efficiency could allow urban dwellers to have a smaller carbon footprint relative to suburban or rural populations. The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group recognizes that transitioning to a low-carbon, resource efficient green economy is essential to the future environmental and public health of megacities and the globe.

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## **21. North Carolina Legislature Finds Compromise on Sea Level Rise**

The North Carolina legislature has settled on a compromise for determining rates of sea level rise during the next century that state officials must use in building plans. On June 21, The North Carolina State Senate passed an amended version of House Bill (HB) 819 to require state officials to only plan for an estimated sea level rise of 8 inches by 2100 when planning building projects. This figure was supported by a group of 20 counties, NC-20, that used historical data to calculate their estimation. This stipulation was rejected by the House of Representatives which crafted a compromise bill that later passed the senate.

The North Carolina Coastal Resources Commission (CRC) produced a report in 2010 which recommended that a 39 inch, or one meter, rise be adopted as the amount of anticipated rise by 2100. Critics of the CRC report and NC-20 succeeded in amending HB 819 to require state officials to only plan for a sea level rise of 8 inches by 2100.

The NC House of Representatives received the bill and immediately voted it down 114-0. Representative Pat McElraft (R-Carteret County) led an effort to find a compromise and settled on a bill that would reject the NC-20 figure but would require more sea level rise studies by the CRC in the next four years. The state would not be allowed to prepare for 39 inch sea level rise by 2100 in the meantime. The State Senate voted 40-1 to agree to the compromise language on July 2 and the House is expected to follow before the bill is signed by the governor.

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## **22. South Carolina Considers Ending Geology Licensing Board**

A 2012 Regulatory Report released by the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation has recommended closing the South Carolina State Board of Registration for Geologists as a way to streamline the state government and decrease “onerous regulation.” This board formed in 1986 and as of 1993 South Carolina was one of seven states still regulating geology practices.

A state issued license is required to work on projects involving geology and these projects are already regulated elsewhere for safety of the environment. The report states the licensure of a geologist is “rarely” used in consumer decisions. “With methods like certification readily available,” the report argues, “deregulation of Geology can be accomplished without threatening the health, safety, and welfare of the public or diminishing consumers [sic] ability to discern between competing professionals.”

Paul Weaver, chair of the Association of Environmental and Engineering Geologists – Carolinas Section, wrote a letter to Governor Nikki Haley saying that the South Carolina Board of Registration for Geologists members were not contacted to comment on the report before its publication. Weaver argued that, “the protection of the health and welfare of the public, the primary goal behind geologists’ registration, will be seriously diminished without the registration of geologists in place in South Carolina” and that eliminating the board will not save tax payers any money since it is self-funded through licensing fees.

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## **23. Key Reports and Publications**

**\*\*\*Government Accountability Office (GAO)\*\*\***

### **Oil Dispersants: Additional Research Needed, Particularly on Subsurface and Arctic Applications**

This report focuses on the study of chemical dispersants and their use in managing environmental impacts. It looks into the measures the federal agencies have taken to increase knowledge on the use and effects of dispersants as well as the challenges faced when trying to enhance knowledge. GAO recommends the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Oil and Pollution Research release updates on dispersant research periodically and that subsurface Arctic applications are among future research areas.

### **Environmental Satellites: Focused Attention Needed to Mitigate Program Risks**

This report discusses the Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS) and the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite-R (GOES-R). These two systems are supposed to replace the current satellites, and are critical for data gathering for weather forecasting. GAO discusses GOES-R schedule and management reserve data’s shortcoming in the report.

### **Geostationary Weather Satellites: Design Progress Made, but Schedule Uncertainty Needs to be Addressed**

Four satellites compose the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite-R, which is intended to replace current weather satellites expected to expire around 2015. GAO looked at National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) progress in developing the satellite, the schedule for the program, and risk management and mitigation. GAO gave several recommendations regarding the program, to which NOAA acknowledged or partially acknowledged.

### **Polar-Orbiting Environmental Satellites: Changing Requirements, Technical Issues, and Looming Data Gaps Require Focused Attention**

This report focuses on the National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS). After eight years of development, costs have doubled to about \$15 billion and launch dates pushed back by over five years. The NPOESS was to replace two existing polar-orbiting environmental satellite systems, but in February 2010 was ended by the presidential task force.



GAO looks at responsibility transfers from the NPOESS program to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of Defense (DOD), the development of the satellite system, and risk mitigation. GAO recommended to NOAA the establishment of mitigation plans for risk of satellite data gaps.

### **Managing Critical Isotopes: Department of Energy's Isotope Program Needs Better Planning for Setting Prices and Managing Production Risks**

In this report, GAO investigated the Isotope Program and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) to determine the types of isotopes produced, sold, or distributed and how the isotopes are available for commercial and research use. They looked at the assessment and mitigation of risks performed by the Department of Energy in regards to the Isotope Program. GAO made several recommendations which are included in the report.

### **Phosphate Mining: Oversight Has Strengthened, but Financial Assurances and Coordination Still Need Improvement**

This report evaluated the effectiveness of environmental oversight, financial assurance and coordination policies in the phosphate mining industry. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been successful in assessing the extent of selenium contamination, but needs to improve in implementing and documenting financial assurance policy and coordinating with the Forest Service.

### **Commercial Space Launch Act: Preliminary Information on Issues to Consider for Reauthorization**

The report found that the U.S. offers less compensation to third party companies than other countries which are promoting commercial space flight. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) dictates the amount of insurance a space flight company must acquire, but its standards and risk modeling methods are outdated. The insurance market is willing to offer more indemnity than is being required by the FAA. The report refrained from making recommendations until its final report on the Commercial Space Launch Act.

### **Disaster Recovery: Selected Themes for Effective Long-Term Recovery**

This report assessed the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) procedure for Long-Term Community Recovery and identified key themes for effective long-term recovery. Three of these key themes are to clearly define recovery roles and responsibilities, to encourage communication and collaboration among recovery stakeholders, and periodically evaluate recovery progress. The report recommended the National Disaster Recovery Framework as a means to implement these themes.

### **Commercial Space Transportation: Industry Trends, Government Challenges and International Competitiveness Issues**

This report evaluates the state of commercial space transportation. Commercial space launches are expected to increase in coming years both for tourism and for supplying the International Space Station. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) should expect to improve oversight to avoid conflict between industry promotion and safety concerns. Launch costs are higher in the U.S. than in many other countries because of a lack of government indemnification.

### **\*\*\*National Academy of Sciences (NAS)\*\*\***

### **Dam and Levee Safety and Community Resilience: A Vision for Future Practice**

This report looks at the broadening of dam and levee safety programs to include community- and regional-level priorities in decision making. This could reduce the risk and increase community resilience to dam and levee failures. Even though engineering of dams have reduced the risk of failure, this report highlights the safety culture shifts necessary for community resilience inclusion in dam and levee safety programs.

### **Induced Seismicity Potential in Energy Technologies**

Following a request made by Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), the National Academy of Sciences compiled a report on the potential for energy development to cause a seismic event. The report found that there are seismic events which can be linked to energy technologies and the majority of the hazard comes from injection and extraction of fluids into the ground. The report emphasized that increased seismic monitoring at waste water injection and carbon capture and sequestration sites would reject or support this finding more definitively.

### **Review of the EPA's Economic Analysis of Final Water Quality Standards for Lakes and Flowing Waters in Florida**

In 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a report titled, "Economic Analysis of Final Water Quality Standards for Nutrients for Lakes and Flowing Waters in Florida." This National Academies report determined the EPA's estimated cost of putting numeric nutrient criteria in place was lower than expected. The EPA's analysis only included "incremental cost of reducing nutrients" in newly impaired waters. This incremental method is correct for this assessment, but the cost analysis would have been "more accurate" if the description of differences between the numeric nutrient criteria rule and old narrative rule were listed.

### **Research Universities and the Future of America: Ten Breakthrough Actions Vital to Our Nation's Prosperity and Security**

This report focuses on making sure U.S. research universities help in America's prosperity, security, and national goals. Specifically, ten actions by governments, universities and the general public are laid out that would reinforce the research university's mission and better their relationships with other national groups and society. Discussions on university finance,

operations, and diversity, as well as advanced graduate studies are included.

#### **Urban Meteorology: Forecasting, Monitoring, and Meeting Users' Needs**

This report is based on information and discussion gathered at a Board on Atmospheric Sciences and Climate community workshop. It focuses on needs that are not being met by current urban-level forecasting and monitoring as well as current and rising meteorological forecasting and monitoring techniques. For the urban meteorology field to advance, short-term needs and future challenges require investments and major efforts.

#### **Progress Toward Restoring the Everglades: The Fourth Biennial Review, 2012**

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project has been going on for 12 years and little progress is to be shown. This report discusses the approach used to hasten the restoration projects. It includes information on further analysis of the quality and quantity of water, which will be beneficial to achieving the restoration benefits.

#### **Transportation Research Board Special Report 309: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Offshore Safety and Environmental Management Systems**

This report was produced by the Transportation Research Board as Special Report 309. It recommends approaches the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) should take in evaluation of offshore oil and gas Safety and Environmental Management Systems (SEMS) programs. These include inspections, audits, key performance indicators, and a whistleblower program. The report analyzes the SEMS and safety management systems.

#### **Sea-Level Rise for the Coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington: Past, Present, and Future**

This report is a result of California Executive Order S-13-08 to plan for sea-level rise and the associated coastal impacts. West Coast sea-level rise projections for 2030, 2050, and 2100 were made using tide gage records, satellite altimetry measurements, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change emissions estimates. The report concludes that sea level will rise 10 to 143 centimeters south of Cape Mendocino, California and 42-167 centimeters north of Cape Mendocino by 2100.

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#### **24. Key Federal Register Notices**

**EO-** The President has proclaimed the week of May 27 to June 2 as National Hurricane Preparedness Week. [Friday, June 1 2012 (Volume 77, Number 106)]

**EPA-** The Environmental Protection Agency has requested nominations for the Good Neighbor Environmental Board. The Board advises the President on environmental matters relating to Mexico. [Friday, June 1 2012 (Volume 77, Number 106)]

**DOC-** The Department of Commerce Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Advisory Committee is having an open meeting on June 14 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.. The meeting will be held in the Department of Commerce building, room 4830. [Friday, June 1 2012 (Volume 77, Number 106)]

**USGS-** The Department of the Interior is seeking nominations for the National Geospatial Advisory Committee. Applications must be received by July 19, 2012. [Monday, June 4 2012 (Volume 77, Number 107)]

**DOI-** The Department of the Interior is holding a public meeting of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Advisory Committee on June 26 and 27 from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Department of the Interior, South Interior Building Auditorium. [Wednesday, June 6 2012 (Volume 77, Number 109)]

**EPA-** The EPA has listed carbon dioxide as an acceptable substitute for automobile air conditioner refrigerant. The substitute will not deplete stratospheric ozone. [Wednesday, June 6 2012 (Volume 77, Number 109)]

**EPA-** The EPA is proposing amendments to the national emissions standards for hazardous air pollutants for stationary reciprocating internal combustion engines. A public meeting will be held June 22nd. Comments are due by July 23, 2012 or 30 days after the public meeting if it is postponed. [Thursday, June 7 2012 (Volume 77, Number 110)]

**EO-** The President has proclaimed June 2012 as National Oceans Month. [Thursday, June 7 2012 (Volume 77, Number 110)]

**EO-** The President has proclaimed June 2012 as Great Outdoors Month. [Thursday, June 7 2012 (Volume 77, Number 110)]

**DOI-** The Department of the Interior is seeking nominations for the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council. Applications must be received by August 3, 2012. [Thursday, June 7 2012 (Volume 77, Number 110)]

**USGS-** The U.S. Geological Survey is creating 10-year strategies for each of its Mission Areas: Climate and Land Use Change, Core Science Systems, Ecosystems, Energy and Minerals, Environmental Health, Natural Hazards, and Water. [Friday, June 8 2012 (Volume 77, Number 111)]

**NASA-** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announces meetings of its Science Committee Heliophysics Subcommittee of the NASA Advisory Council. The meetings will be Monday, July 2 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Tuesday July 3 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at NASA Headquarters, 300 E St SW, Room 6H45, Washington, DC. [Friday, June 8 2012 (Volume 77, Number 111)]

**EPA-** The National Drinking Water Advisory Council will be holding a series of public meetings on issues associated with

drinking water protection and public water systems. A webinar/conference call will be held Wednesday June 27 from 1 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. EDT. Two in-person meetings will be held on September 12 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CDT and September 13 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. CDT at EPA's Chicago Regional Office in the Ralph Metcalfe Federal Building, 77 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, IL. [Monday, June 11, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 112)]

**FERC-** The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is having a joint public meeting with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) at FERC Headquarters from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The meeting will be to discuss interaction between the FERC and NRC on matters of mutual interest pertaining to the nation's bulk power system reliability. [Monday, June 11, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 112)]

**USGS-** The U.S. Geological Survey invites the public to comment on a new Information Collection regarding volcano ash fall. Comments are due by August 10. [Monday, June 11, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 112)]

**USDA-** The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service is proposing new categorical exclusions to the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). The exclusions would increase efficiency in analyzing and documenting environmental effects of soil and water restoration projects. [Wednesday, June 13, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 114)]

**EPA-** The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Scientific Advisory Board (SBA) and Office of Research and Development (ORD) will be holding a joint public meeting on July 10 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and July 11 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The meeting will discuss the restructuring of ORD's research programs. [Monday, June 18, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 117)]

**DOS-** The Department of State will be holding a public meeting on July 19 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. to discuss a proposed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS will evaluate the impacts on the affected environment, including, but not limited to, socioeconomics, traffic and transportation, land use, historic and cultural resources, noise, air quality, environmental justice, and cumulative impacts [Monday, June 18, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 117)]

**NOAA-** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's (NOAA) released a draft programmatic environmental assessment (PEA) of hydrographic surveys of Office of Coast Survey (OCS). Hydrographic surveys produce maps and nautical charts of U.S. ocean and coastal waters. The draft is available for public review and comment through July 22, 2012. [Wednesday, June 20, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 119)]

**FEMA-** The Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Advisory Council will be holding a public meeting on Thursday, July 12. The meeting will take place between 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. in Arlington, VA. [Monday, June 25, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 122)]

**BLM-** The Bureau of Land Management is extending the comment period on a proposed rule to regulate hydraulic fracturing on public and Indian land. The rule would strengthen regulations to wellbore integrity, address issues to flowback water and require full disclosure of the chemicals used. The comment period is extended to September 10, 2012. [Tuesday, June 26, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 123)]

**NASA-** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Advisory Council Committee on Education and Public Outreach will be holding a public meeting on Tuesday, July 24, 2012 from 8:30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. The meeting will be held at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Building 34, Room 120A in Greenbelt, MD. [Tuesday, June 26, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 123)]

**NASA-** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Advisory Council Committee on Science will be holding a public meeting on Monday, July 23, 2012 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Tuesday, July 24, 2012 from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Building 1, Room E100E in Greenbelt, MD. [Tuesday, June 26, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 123)]

**NOAA-** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association will be holding a public meeting of its Science Advisory Board. The meeting will be held on Monday, July 16 from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Tuesday, July 17 from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at NOAA Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory in Seattle, Washington. [Wednesday June 27, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 124)]

**DOE-** The Department of Energy announces a public meeting of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). The meeting will be held on July 19, 2012 at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. More information and a registration page for this meeting can be found at the council's web site. [Wednesday June 27, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 124)]

**DOE-** The Department of Energy announces an open teleconference of the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board on Thursday, July 19 from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Those who wish to call in should RSVP to Alyssa Morrissey before Monday, July 16 at 5:00 p.m. [Wednesday June 27, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 124)]

**USGS-** The U.S. Geological Survey announces an open meeting of its Advisory Committee of Water Information to discuss broad policy-related topics relating to national water initiatives, and the development and dissemination of water information. The meeting will be held on July 10 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and July 11 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Dulles

Airport in Herndon, VA. [Wednesday June 27, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 124)]

**USGS-** The U.S. Geological Survey's National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program (NCGMP) and National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program (NGGDPP) Advisory Council will hold a public audioconference on July 19, 2012, from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. For more information and the telephone number and access code of the meeting contact Michael Marketti with the USGS. [Wednesday June 27, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 124)]

**NASA-** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration will hold a public meeting of its Advisory Council on Wednesday, July 25, 2012 from 12 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Thursday, July 26, 2012 from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Friday, July 27, 2012 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. The meeting will be held at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Building 1, Rooms E100E/D in Greenbelt, MD. [Wednesday June 27, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 124)]

**CG-** The U.S. Coast Guard has released a final rule on the International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships, 1969, for oil spill response vessels. The present size threshold is 500 gross register tons. This final rule provides an alternative for owners and operators of offshore supply vessels that may result in an increase in oil spill response capacity and capability. [Friday June 29, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 126)]

**NSF-** The National Science Foundation (NSF) announces an open meeting of its Advisory Committee for Innovation Corps on July 18 from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The meeting will be held in the NSF building in Arlington, VA. [Friday June 29, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 126)]

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## 25. Key AGI Geoscience Policy Updates

- Briefing on Hydraulic Fracturing (6/26/12)
- Hearing on the Nation's Science Policies (6/26/12)
- Forum on Next Generation Science Standards (6/22/12)
- Hearing on EPA Air Standards for Hydraulically Fractures Natural Gas Wells (6/22/12)
- Hearing on EPA Greenhouse Gas Emission Regulations (6/22/12)
- Hearing on Induced Seismicity in Energy Technologies (6/21/12)
- Hearing on U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (6/21/12)
- Hearing on U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (6/20/12)
- Hearing on Nominations to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (6/20/12)
- Briefing on Digitizing Science Collections (6/20/12)
- Hearing on China and Clean Energy (6/15/12)
- Hearing on Nuclear Waste Storage and Management (6/13/12)
- Capitol Hill Ocean Week: One Nation, Shaped by the Sea (6/13/12)
- BHEF Presents Projects for NexGen Workforce (6/13/12)
- Hearing on Obama Administration's Energy Strategy (6/12/12)
- Hearing on European Union Emissions Trading System (6/6/12)
- Hearing on NSF Major Multi-User Facilities Management (6/5/12)

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Sources: Associated Press, AAAS, Environment and Energy Daily, Greenwire, New York Times, Washington Post, National Academies Press, Government Accountability Office, Open CRS, Thomas, House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, the White House, Department of Energy, Department of the Interior, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, National Science Foundation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Department of Commerce, United Nations, Department of Education, Department of Defense, Department of State, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Forest Service, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, North Carolina Legislature, South Carolina Office of the Governor, Raleigh News and Observer

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This monthly review goes out to members of the AGI Geoscience Policy Committee, the leadership of AGI's member societies, and others as part of a continuing effort to improve communications about the role of geoscience in policy. For additional information on specific policy issues, please visit the web site or contact us at [govt@agiweb.org](mailto:govt@agiweb.org) or (703) 379-2480.



