Monthly Review: January 2013

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. AGI Welcomes Geoscience Policy Director Maeve Boland

The American Geosciences Institute (AGI) is pleased to welcome Dr. Maeve Boland as AGI's new Director of Geoscience Policy. AGI's Geoscience Policy program serves as a link between the geosciences community and policymakers by sustaining communication, ensuring quality information flow, and representing the voices of AGI Member Societies.

Boland has a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies surrounding geoscience policy. She has extensive experience in industry, academia, and policy settings. After receiving B.A. and M.Sc. degrees in Geology from Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, Boland worked in petroleum and mineral exploration in the private sector, and industrial minerals at the Geological Survey of Ireland. She later received her Ph.D. in Geology from the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colorado, where she developed her policy expertise and taught multiple courses on the intersection of science and policy. Most recently, Boland served as a AAAS Executive Branch Science & Technology Policy Fellow at the USGS (2010-2012) and as the American Geophysical Union Congressional Science Fellow in the U.S. Senate (2009-2010). During her fellowships, Boland collaborated with stakeholders from Capitol Hill, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Department of Energy, the White House, and the private sector to address geoscience policy issues crucial to society. In her new role, Boland will serve as a focused voice for the shared policy interests of the geoscience profession.

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2. Congressional Visits Day in March – Join Us in DC

Geoscientists are invited to join organized groups of scientists and engineers for workshops and visits with congressional members and committees at this year's Science – Engineering – Technology Congressional Visits Day (SET-CVD) on March 12-13, 2013.

Decision makers need to hear from geoscientists. Become a citizen geoscientist and join many of your colleagues for a workshop followed by a day of conducting visits with members of Congress or congressional staff on Capitol Hill to speak about the importance of geoscience research, development, and education.

Please send an email to bonner at agiweb.org for more information or to sign up.

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3. AGI's 2013 AIPG/AGI Summer Internships - Deadine March 15

The American Geosciences Institute's Geoscience Policy program offers summer and semester internship opportunities for geoscience students (undergraduate students and/or Masters students) with an interest in public policy and in how Washington impacts the geoscience community.

Interns gain a first-hand understanding of the legislative process and the operation of executive branch agencies while enhancing their writing, research, and web publishing skills. Deadlines for online submission of applications are March 15 for summer, April 15 for fall and October 15, 2013 for spring 2014.

The American Geophysical Union, the Soil Science Society of America, the American Institute of Physics, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Chemical Society offer similar internships that may be of interest to geoscience students. Please visit their web sites or contact Wilson Bonner at bonner at agiweb.org for more information.

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4. Obama Features Climate Change Prominently in Inaugural Address

President Obama's second inaugural address, delivered January 21, 2013, emphasized the need to respond to climate change in order to preserve the nation for posterity.

He said, "We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations." Obama reiterated that while "some may still deny the overwhelming judgment of science…none can avoid" the increasingly severe fires, droughts, and storms. He charged the U.S. with the responsibility to be at the forefront of sustainable energy research and development for economic as well as environmental reasons.

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5. Appropriations Update for January 2013

In January 2013, Congress passed the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 (ATRA, P.L. 112-240) to delay the sequestration, or automatic, across-the-board spending cuts, for two months and passed a measure to temporarily suspend the borrowing limit (the "debt ceiling") until May 19. The debt ceiling bill, called the No Budget, No Pay Act (H.R. 325), would also suspend pay for members of Congress if they do not pass a budget resolution for fiscal year (FY) 2014 by April 15, 2013.

Even though Congress delayed the vote to raise the debt ceiling until mid-May, they still have two big budget deadlines approaching in March. The first is the sequestration due to take effect on March 1 and the second is the expiration of the current continuing resolution (CR, H.J. Res 117) for FY 2013 on March 27. The upcoming deadlines will likely be tied to deficit reduction efforts meaning further cuts to discretionary spending, including geoscience research and development (R&D), are possible.

AGI encourages all geoscientists to contact their members of Congress and ask them to avoid the sequestration and find a balanced approach to deficit reduction. Geoscience R&D and non-defense discretionary spending account for less than 20 percent of the federal budget and have already absorbed significant reductions over the next decade under the BCA spending caps and other measures. Increasing cuts to these vital R&D programs would mean fewer research grants, fewer student research opportunities, and fewer jobs. On AGI's sequestration advocacy web site, you will find a sample letter to members of congress urging for a balanced approach to deficit reduction and protection of geoscience R&D that you are encouraged to use or adapt.

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6. Congress Passes $60 Billion in Hurricane Sandy Supplemental Aid Package

Congress agreed in January to increase the borrowing authority for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) by $9.7 billion and to provide $50 billion in supplemental appropriations both as a result of the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy. In October 2012, Hurricane Sandy devastated the northeast United States and caused an estimated $63 billion in damages.

The Senate passed a $60.4 billion bill in December at the end of the 112th Congress but the House did not take it up for a vote before the end of the Congress. On January 4, the House passed a bill to increase the borrowing authority of the NFIP by $9.7 billion (H.R. 41) which the Senate agreed to on the same day. The $50 billion supplemental, or the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, 2013 (H.R. 152), was passed in the House on January 15 and in the Senate on January 28. Among the federal agencies that received supplemental appropriations in H.R. 152 were the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) which received $3 million for oil spill research, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) which received $326 million for mapping and geodetic surveys, improved weather forecasting, coastal and ocean research, and improvements and repairs to damaged NOAA facilities. $111 million of NOAA's supplemental appropriations is designated for a weather satellite data mitigation gap reserve fund. NOAA expects a potential weather data gap in 2016 due to technological setbacks transitioning from the now terminated National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS) and the Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS) not expected to launch until 2017.

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7. Senator Vitter Introduces Bill to Prevent Emissions Regulations

Senator David Vitter (R-LA) introduced legislation (S. 163) on January 28, 2013 to prevent the enactment of greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction regulations in the U.S. until China, India, and Russia enact similar regulations.

Senator Vitter is the new ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee which is the committee most likely to produce a climate bill this Congress. Chairwoman Barbara Boxer (D-CA) has reiterated that climate change legislation will be a priority for her and for the committee over the next two years. Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), the former ranking member of the committee, has co-sponsored S. 163.

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8. McNutt, Salazar, and Chu Resign

In January 2013, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Energy Secretary Steven Chu, and U.S. Geological Society (USGS) Director Marcia McNutt announced their intention to step down from their respective posts.

Both Salazar and Chu were appointed by President Obama and have served in their positions for four years. During his tenure, Salazar responded to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill; established ten national wildlife refuges and seven national parks; and allowed Shell to begin Alaskan Arctic oil exploration. He increased the Department of the Interior's focus on renewable energy and authorized 34 solar, wind, and geothermal energy projects to power over three million homes.

Chu invested in renewable energy research and development, establishing several Energy Innovation Hubs including the most recent Critical Materials Institute at Ames Laboratory. Two previously authorized programs that Chu focused on were the

Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) and loans to green technology projects.

McNutt, after serving as the USGS director since October 2009, released a letter announcing her resignation which can be found on the Arizona Geology Blog. She will remain at the USGS until the launch of the new Landsat 8 satellite, also known as the Landsat Data Continuity Mission, in February 2013.

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9. DOE Releases Strategy for Management and Disposal of Nuclear Waste

On January 11, the Department of Energy (DOE) released a report detailing its strategy for managing the disposal of the nation's used nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. The report calls for a pilot interim storage facility to be built by 2021, a larger interim facility in 2025, and a final geologic repository in 2048.

The report largely follows the recommendations put forth in the final report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future (BRC). Former Senator and Chairman of the Senate and Energy and Natural Resources Committee Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) introduced the Nuclear Waste Administration Act (S. 3469) in the 112th Congress. The bill, which died at the end of the Congress, was also based off the BRC's recommendations but would have blocked the approval of temporary storage sites until a permanent repository was identified.

Another hotly debated aspect of the nuclear waste issue is whether nuclear utilities should continue to pay fees to DOE for the transportation and storage of their waste if no permanent storage site exists. The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) and the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) sued DOE in 2010 challenging whether the fees remained necessary. In 2012, the court ordered DOE to submit a report in January 2013 on how the fees were being used to advance nuclear waste storage efforts. DOE filed a response to the court in January determining that the fees are necessary as the administration and Congress pursue a new nuclear waste strategy. NARUC and NEI disagreed with DOE's report claiming that it was based on the assumption that Congress would pass a nuclear waste policy and submitted a motion to reopen the case with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

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10. Bureau of Land Management to Redo Draft of Hydraulic Fracturing Rule

The Department of the Interior (DOI) announced on January 18 that it would revise the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) draft rule to regulate hydraulic fracturing on public lands. The draft rule was first proposed by the agency in May 2012 and would require disclosure of chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process on federal and Indian lands within a month of a fracturing job. A new proposal is expected sometime in the first quarter of 2013.

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11. EIA 2011 Natural Gas Report Outlines Shifts in Production and Consumption

On January 7, 2013, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) issued the 2011 Natural Gas Annual which outlines data on natural gas gross production between 2007 and 2011.

The report provides a series of data tables and figures that illustrate the natural gas cycle in the U.S. from production to consumption. It outlines data on the supply, import and export, movements and storage, consumption, and price of natural gas at the national and state levels. The report found that gross production from shale formations rose from 8 percent of total gross production in 2007 to 30 percent in 2011, whereas gross production from coalbed methane fell from 8 percent in 2007 to 6 percent in 2011. A total of 28.5 trillion cubic feet of oil and gas was withdrawn from domestic wells with 22.9 trillion cubic feet resulting in dry gas production. While national consumer prices increased for vehicle fuel use from 2010 to 2011, prices decreased for residential, commercial, industrial, and economic power uses.

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12. Department of Energy Launches Critical Materials Institute

The Department of Energy (DOE) announced on January 9, 2013 that it will be establishing an Energy Innovation Hub named the Critical Materials Institute (CMI) which will be a collaboration of academic, national lab, and private sector researchers. Ames Laboratory has been awarded up to $120 million for the next five years to direct CMI.

The DOE's 2011 Critical Materials Strategy indicated that clean energy industry faces future shortages in the supply of rare earth elements and other critical materials. CMI is tasked with improving the use of existing material supplies while developing technologies that allow for the use of new materials.

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13. EPA Releases Climate Change Indicators 2012 Report

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released the 2012 updated version of the *Climate Change Indicators in the United States* report which details changes in 26 indicators which are grouped into five categories: greenhouse gases, weather and climate, oceans, snow and ice, and society and ecosystems.

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14. Court Rejects EPA's Request to Reconsider Cross-State Air Pollution Rule

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit announced January 24, 2013 that it will not reconsider its August 21, 2012 ruling on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Cross-State Air Pollution Rule (CSAPR). The court's initial 2-1 ruling rejected the CSAPR as overstepping the EPA's authority under the Clean Air Act (P.L. 88-206).

The initial ruling claimed that the EPA could not require, as it did in CSAPR, that states reduce pollutants by more than the amount they contributed to other states. The court also indicated that states should have the authority to develop plans to reduce emission before being required to follow a federal plan.

The CSAPR intended to respond to the transport of air pollution from one state to another by requiring 28 upwind states to reduce sulfur dioxide and annual and/or ozone seasonal nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide (NOx) emissions. These regulations would assist downwind state in achieving EPA standards for clean air.

The EPA must now either revise the CSAPR or request an appeal before the U.S. Supreme Court.

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15. DOI Forms Strategic Sciences Group to Manage Future Environmental Crises

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced the Department of the Interior's (DOI) establishment of the Strategic Sciences Group to provide scientific evaluations of environmental crises that threaten natural resources and assist in developing effective responses.

Salazar's Secretarial Order details the group's role: scientifically assess environmental crises, develop scenarios, and perform research during crises. DOI has been involved in crisis response and recovery for a number of environmental disasters in recent years including Hurricane Katrina and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The group's results will be used by DOI leadership to improve their crisis management.

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16. NRC Reviews Federal Plans for Responding to Ocean Acidification

In January 2013, the National Research Council (NRC) released their review of the Strategic Plan for Federal Research and Monitoring of Ocean Acidification. The strategic plan was generated by the Interagency Working Group on Ocean Acidification (IWGOA) which was established by the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring (FOARAM) Act of 2009, part of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-11), and tasked to create a National Ocean Acidification Program. The NRC review, titled Review of the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Plan, recommended that the strategic plan prioritize natural science research that focuses on areas of socioeconomic concern.

The FOARAM Act set out seven themes for the IWGOA to address: monitoring; research; modeling; technological developments; socioeconomic impacts; education, outreach, and engagement strategies; and data management and integration. The NRC review indicated that the strategic plan needs to better integrate the seven themes outlined in the FOARAM Act. It expressed the need to provide processes for setting priorities; improving interagency, national, and international coordination; and reevaluating priorities

and the implementation progress. The review advised establishing a more detailed plan for the creation, function, and governance of the National Ocean Acidification Program Office.

Establishment of the FOARAM Act stemmed from an increase in ocean acidification, or the lowering of ocean water pH due to more carbon dioxide dissolved in the oceans. Since pre-Industrial Revolution levels, ocean acidity has increased 30 percent and is predicted to have increased a total of 100-150 percent by the end of the century. Research is needed into the effects of rising acidity on marine life as fish represent 6.5 percent of the world's protein and coral reefs are valuable habitats and coastal protection systems. Shifts in the socioeconomic systems that rely on these marine systems should, as the review advises, drive marine research.

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17. Climate Change Could Severely Impact Coastal Communities

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) released a report titled Coastal Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerabilities: A Technical Input to the 2013 National Climate Assessment. The report details the potential effects of climate change on the nation's coastal environments and economy while calling for improved coastal management efforts.

About 50 percent, or $8.3 trillion, of the U.S. annual gross domestic product in 2010 was from coastal economies. The population living in coastal areas represents over 50 percent of the country's population and is expected to increase over the next century by 144 percent. The report finds that all coastal communities are vulnerable to increasing rates and intensity of sea-level rise, erosion, storms, flooding, and ocean acidification, which result from climate change.

The report argues policymakers need to implement measures to build sustainable coastal communities and many of these measures must be made at the local level. Challenges include gaps in scientific knowledge, primarily with regard to extent and speed of glacial melting and the lack of an agreed-upon rate of sea-level rise.

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18. Japan Decreases Science and Technology Budget But Provides Stimulus

The Japanese government approved their annual budget on January 29, 2013 and decreased the amount of funds available to the Ministry of Education for science and technology by 3.3 percent resulting in a budget of $13.2 billion (USD). Much of this decrease is due to a shift in nuclear safety research to a new regulatory agency while much of the rest is offset by a stimulus package.

Two-thirds of the lost funds are from the shift in nuclear safety research. The budget will increase funding for new energy technologies to $80 million, nearly three times its previous amount. Funding for work on the Hayabusa 2 asteroid sample return spacecraft and the Advanced Land Observing Satellite-2 will increase 80 percent to $160 million due to funding from the budget and $113 million from the stimulus. The stimulus plan provides an increase in funding of $299 million to large research facilities that offsets budget cuts of $42 million per year until reaching $541 million.

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19. BP Seeks to Reduce Clean Water Act Violation Fine

On January 11, BP submitted a motion with federal judge Carl Barbier requesting a decision on whether the 810,000 barrels of oil captured at the well head as a result of the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon blowout should be counted in the final total discharge figure. Fines for Clean Water Act violations are calculated based on the total amount of oil discharged.

In August 2010, the Flow Rate Technical Group, made up of scientists and engineers from academia, industry, and the federal government and chaired by then Director Marcia McNutt of the United States Geological Survey, estimated that 4.9 million barrels of oil had been discharged from the wellhead. BP points out in its motion that several courts have interpreted the law to mean oil has to be discharged into the water or environment to be part of the total figure and claims it should not be liable for the oil it collected. The U.S. government estimates BP could face penalties as low as $5 billion and as high as $21 billion. If the company is successful in reducing the total discharge amount, it could reduce its penalties to between $4.5 billion and $17.6 billion.

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20. Unconventional Wells Produce Less Wastewater Per Unit, More Overall

A new study published in *Water Resources Research* reveals that unconventional wells producing the Marcellus shale in

Pennsylvania produce considerably less wastewater per unit than do conventional wells. However, these unconventional wells extract many more units of natural gas than conventional wells.

The authors examined data from 2,189 wells and found that, in addition to producing only about 35 percent as much wastewater per unit gas recovered as conventional wells, wastewater from unconventional wells is also only 32.3 percent from flowback. Overall, unconventional wells still produce 10 times more waste than conventional wells as 30 times more units of gas are extracted. Rapid development of the Marcellus shale increased wastewater generation from these wells by 570 percent since 2004. Up to 70 percent of wastewater results as late as four years after initial drilling. Disposal of the wastewater has threatened to exceed the capacity of municipal infrastructure. Some companies have chosen to dispose of wastewater in the Ohio River basin, given stronger regulations in the Susquehanna River basin.

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21. Legislation to Lift Virginia Moratorium on Uranium Mining Gains Support

In a meeting of the Virginia Coal and Energy Commission on January 7, 2013, the commission voted 11-2 to support legislation to lift the state's 30-year moratorium on uranium mining.

This vote followed Governor Bob McDonnell's (R-VA) Uranium Working Group's (UWG) presentation of their findings at the end of last year. The UWG report, titled *Commonwealth of Virginia 2012 Uranium Working Group Report*, makes no recommendation regarding the moratorium; rather, it outlines a regulatory framework under which uranium mining could be conducted if the moratorium was lifted.

Following the release of the UWG report and the commission's vote, state Senator John Watkins (R-VA) announced that he will be introducing a bill to lift the ban on and regulate uranium mining, but only for the deposit at Coles Hill in Pittsylvania County. Walter Coles owns the property, mineral rights, and the company Virginia Uranium Inc. which he established to press for a lift of the ban when uranium prices rose in 2007. The approximately 119 million pounds of uranium oxide at Coles Hill make it the country's largest undeveloped uranium deposit. It would provide an estimated 2 million pounds of uranium per year, significantly increasing overall domestic uranium production which was about 4 million pounds in 2011.

Supporters emphasize the ability to mine safely and the prospect of increased domestic production and job creation should the legislation be passed. Opponents raise concerns over the potential for mining to spread beyond Coles Hill and the potential for environmental contamination. Many worry that mining within the Coles Hill area's watershed, which feeds the water supply for many coastal cities including Virginia Beach, will contaminate the state's drinking water.

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22. Elsevier Focuses on the Unconventional with New Journal

On January 16, 2013, Elsevier announced the launch of their new Journal of Unconventional Oil and Gas Resources (JUOGR). JUOGR will publish material on unconventional resources including tight gas, shale gas, liquid rich shales, tight oil, coalbed methane, and gas hydrate.

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23. AGI Welcomes 2013 AAPG/AGI Spring Intern Kimberley Corwin

The American Geosciences Institute welcomes Kimberley Corwin from Vail, Colorado as its 2013 AAPG/AGI Spring Geoscience and Public Policy Intern.

Kimberley graduated with honors from Wellesley College in May 2011 with a B.A. degree in Geosciences and Medieval/Renaissance Studies. As an undergraduate, she conducted research through Wellesley and the Cape Cod National Seashore examining the effects of extensive vegetative dieback on the dynamics of sediment transport, deposition, and carbon sequestration within a salt marsh system. The results were presented at the 2009 Geological Society of America's annual meeting. After graduation, she interned at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History with the Cities Under the Sea Geoarchaeology Program. She conducted research on the development of a new method for assessing sediment compaction and subsequent sea-level rise along the northern third of the Nile Delta and co-authored the resulting paper in the Journal of Coastal Research. Her future goals center on working at the intersection of seismology, geohazards, and disaster management and policy.

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24. Key Reports and Publications

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

Pipeline Safety: Better Data and Guidance Needed to Improve Pipeline Operator Incident Response

This report is a response to the directive in the Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011 that required the GAO to examine the Department of Transportation's (DOT) Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA) policies for pipeline operator response during spills. Operators are required to develop incident response plans and, if in high consequence areas, consider installing automated valves. GAO isolates a need for better collection and use of incident response data as well as increased sharing of information with operators.

Hazardous liquid and natural gas pipelines extend 2.5 million miles in the U.S. with over 400,000 of those miles tasked with transmitting products between facilities and users.

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

Future U.S. Workforce for Geospatial Intelligence

In a time of multiple and evolving threats to our national security, the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) will need to better depict and assess these threats visually using imagery and other geographically-referenced information. The NGA's challenge is to maintain a workforce that can deal with evolving threats, ongoing scientific and technological advances, and changing skills and expectations of workers.

This report assesses the supply of expertise in 10 different geospatial intelligence fields including geodesy and geophysics. The report identifies gaps in expertise relative to NGA's needs and suggests ways to endure an adequate supply of geospatial intelligence expertise over the next 20 years.

An Evaluation of the U.S. Department of Energy's Marine and Hydrokinetic Resource Assessments

The Department of Energy (DOE) asked the National Research Council to evaluate its Marine and Hydrokinetic (MHK) resource assessments. MHK resources include ocean tides, waves and currents; temperature gradients in the ocean; and free-flowing rivers and streams. The report contains an evaluation of all five of the DOE resource categories as well as the committee's comments on the overall evaluation process.

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25. Key Federal Register Notices

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing the meeting schedule for the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) for 2013. More information can be found in the notice. [Thursday, January 3, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 2)]

NIST – The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will hold an open meeting of the Visiting Committee on Advanced Technology on February 6 and 7, 2013. Details can be found in the notice. [Thursday, January 3, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 2)]

NRC – The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has released a new regulatory guide titled, "Decommissioning Planning During Operations" which is intended to minimize the likelihood of new "legacy sites." "Legacy sites" are defined as NRC-licensed facilities with insufficient resources to complete decommissioning activities and termination of a license at the end of operation. [Friday, January 4, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 3)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing an open meeting of the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee Lead Review Panel to conduct a peer review of EPA's Integrated Science Assessment for Lead and EPA's Policy Assessment for the Review of Lead National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Details can be found in the notice [Monday, January 7, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 4)]

NRC – The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is requesting public comments on a draft regulatory basis document to support potential amendment of its regulations concerning nuclear power plant licensees' onsite emergency response capabilities. Comments are due February 22, 2013. [Tuesday, January 8, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 5)]

DOE – The Department of Energy is announcing its intention to implement a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) first issued in 2000 to establish domestic production of plutonium-238 at Idaho National Laboratory, Los Alamos National Laboratory and Oak Ridge National Laboratory to support the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and national security missions. In 2005, DOE considered consolidating its nuclear operations related to plutonium-238 at a single site but this notice is reaffirming DOE's initial intention to produce plutonium-238 through several steps taken at different facilities. It

will prepare a supplemental analysis to determine whether a supplement to the 2000 PEIS or a new environmental impact statement should be prepared. [Wednesday, January 9, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 6)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing the extension of the public comment period for the external review of the draft report "Investigation of Ground Water Contamination near Pavillion, Wyoming." Comments are due by September 30, 2013. [Friday, January 11, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 8)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing a final rule for National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter. Details can be found in the notice. [Tuesday, January 15, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 10)]

NOAA – The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) is announcing the availability of a draft Climate Assessment Report for public comment. Comments on the draft must be submitted by April 12, 2013. [Friday, January 18, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 13)]

NOAA – The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Science Advisory Board will hold an open meeting on Tuesday, February 19 from 1 – 3 PM Eastern Standard Time. Details can be found in the notice. [Wednesday, January 23, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 15)]

DOE – The Department of Energy is announcing an open meeting of the Biological and Environmental Research Advisory Committee on February 21 and 22 in Rockville, MD. Details can be found in the notice. [Tuesday, January 29, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 19)]

DOE – The Department of Energy is announcing an open meeting of the Basic Energy Sciences Advisory Committee on February 28 and March 1 in Bethesda, MD. Details can be found in the notice. [Tuesday, January 29, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 19)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing a notice of final action on reconsideration for National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants for Major Sources: Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional Boilers and Process Heaters. The final rule was promulgated in March, 2011 but EPA announced then that it would consider revisions as suggested by public comment. This final action is in response to several comments submitted since. [Thursday, January 31, 2013 (Volume 78, Number 21)]

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26. Key AGI Geoscience Policy Updates

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Monthly Review prepared by Wilson Bonner and Kimberley Corwin 2013 AAPG/AGI Spring Intern.
Sources: Associated Press, AAAS, Environment and Energy Daily, Greenwire, 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. Global Change Research Program, Bureau of Land Management, Virginia State Legislature, Royal Dutch Shell PLC, District Court of Appeals for District of Columbia, Elsevier, Water Resources Research

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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.
Compiled February 5, 2013.