

House Natural Resources Subcommittee holds USGS oversight investigation hearing

December 6, 2016

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing on December 6, 2016, to investigate instances of data manipulation at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The manipulation in question occurred between 1996 and 2014 within the USGS's Energy Resources Program (ERP) Geochemistry Laboratory in Lakewood, CO. According to the USGS, an employee that was not properly trained incorrectly adjusted data for calibration from a mass spectrometer, an instrument which measures chemical composition.

During the hearing, Subcommittee Chairman, Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-TX), questioned USGS Deputy Director William Werkheiser about the incident. The hearing also addressed allegations made in a report by the Department of the Interior Office of the Inspector General of a hostile work environment at the USGS ERP Geochemistry Lab. The USGS is currently investigating the extent of the effects created by the data in question, and has notified end users of its manipulation. The estimated cost of all projects that utilized the false data is \$108 million.

To resolve these issues and prevent similar incidents in the future, the USGS has asked the National Academy of Sciences to review all USGS laboratory quality control procedures and will establish a USGS committee to assess USGS lab conditions. USGS is also initiating an energy program quality management system, and hiring a permanent Quality Management System Manager and two Quality Management System Specialists to maintain lab upkeep procedures.

Sources: House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
