

Policy News & Monthly Review

AGI policy news briefs summarize geoscience policy activities and related events in Washington, D.C. as part of an effort to keep AGI member societies and other audiences informed about relevant federal policy and legislative updates.

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Senate Committee assesses drought conditions in 11 Western States

Date: Tuesday, June 2, 2015

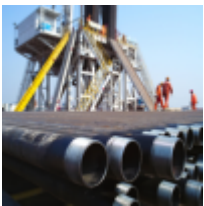
The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on June 2 to assess drought conditions and water challenges in the western United States.



NOAA reports potential coverage risk for U.S. weather data

Date: Monday, June 1, 2015

According to a report from the Department of Commerce's Inspector General, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) weather satellites could be vulnerable for the next 29 months due to construction delays.



Oklahoma passes law prohibiting outright bans on hydraulic fracturing

Date: Monday, June 1, 2015

On May 29, Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin signed a bill into law restricting municipalities from regulating oil and gas activities in their jurisdictions.



Maryland imposes 2-year moratorium on hydraulic fracturing

Date: Saturday, May 30, 2015

With the passage of a new bill, the state of Maryland will not allow hydraulic fracturing until October 1, 2017.



NOAA opens \$24.5 million National Water Center in Alabama

Date: Tuesday, May 26, 2015

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) opened its new National Water Center on The University of Alabama campus on May 26.



Senate Appropriations Committee approves FY 2016 Energy and Water bill

Date: Thursday, May 21, 2015

The Senate Appropriations Committee met on May 21 to mark up the fiscal year (FY) 2016 energy and water development funding bill. The bill that passed the committee totals \$35.4 billion, \$1.2 billion above the FY 2015 enacted level and \$668 million below the President's request.



Asteroid mining bill passes the House

Date: Thursday, May 21, 2015

The House passed the Spurring Private Aerospace Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship Act (SPACE) of 2015 on May 21, which is designed to facilitate exploration and exploitation of space resources by American businesses.



Senate Appropriations Committee finalizes Interior, Environment spending levels for FY 2016

Date: Thursday, May 21, 2015

On May 21, the Senate Appropriations Committee allocated \$30.01 billion to the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies to cover funding for the Department of the Interior (DOI), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Forest Service, and other agencies for fiscal year (FY) 2016.



House Appropriations Committee passes CJS FY 2016 spending bill with cuts to NOAA and NASA programs

Date: Wednesday, May 20, 2015

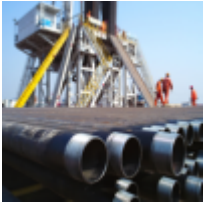
The House Appropriations Committee passed the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) spending bill for fiscal year (FY) 2016 by voice vote on May 20.



House spending bill cuts NSF funding to Geoscience Directorate

Date: Wednesday, May 20, 2015

On May 20, the House Appropriations Committee passed the fiscal year (FY) 2016 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies spending bill with language setting directorate-level funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF), a change from current agency-level funding.



Bicameral push would give DOI discretion over pipeline permits through national parks

Date: Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Members of the House and Senate have introduced bills that would give the Department of the Interior (DOI) authority over natural gas pipeline permitting on federal lands in lieu of congressional oversight.



Senate bill would increase DOE basic energy research funding

Date: Wednesday, May 20, 2015

A Senate bill (S. 1398) introduced on May 20 would provide an alternative to the energy research funding levels proposed in the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015, which passed the House on May 19.



House passes Weather and Forecasting Innovation Act

Date: Wednesday, May 20, 2015

On May 20, the House passed the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act (H.R.1561) which would fund the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) research on storm forecasting and early warning systems.



Bureau of Reclamation sends \$50 million to water-starved Western states for water conservation

Date: Wednesday, May 20, 2015

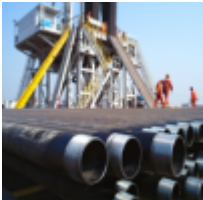
The Department of the Interior announced on May 20 that \$50 million from the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART grants will be sent to 12 drought-stricken states for water reclamation and reuse facilities, recycling and desalination programs, and water and energy infrastructure and efficiency initiatives.



Texas law restricts local laws regarding oil and gas

Date: Tuesday, May 19, 2015

Texas governor Greg Abbott signed TX HB 40 into law on May 19 in an effort to create continuity in oil and gas restrictions across the state.



Murkowski, Heitkamp introduce Senate bill to allow crude oil exports

Date: Tuesday, May 19, 2015

One week after introducing the Energy Supply and Distribution Act of 2015 (S. 1312), which would lift the US ban on exporting its crude oil to other nations, Senators Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) have introduced a second, more focused bill on the issue.



Federal science bill passes House amid funding debate

Date: Tuesday, May 19, 2015

On May 19, the House voted to approve the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 1806).



Murkowski bill to overhaul minerals and mining regulations

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2015

On May 12, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (ENR) held a hearing to consider the American Mineral Security Act of 2015 to increase support for minerals science, information, and forecasting within the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) Mineral Resources Program.



White House conditionally approves Arctic Drilling

Date: Monday, May 11, 2015

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management issued a statement on May 11 granting Royal Dutch Shell PLC conditional drilling

rights in the Chukchi Sea off Alaska's northwest coast.



GAO releases report on oil and gas monitoring and venting

Date: Wednesday, May 6, 2015

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report on the Department of the Interior's (DOI) regulations regarding royalty payments and measurement standards for onshore oil and gas production.



House approves FY 2016 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill

Date: Friday, May 1, 2015

On May 1, the House passed a \$34.5 billion Energy and Water spending bill by a vote of 240-177, largely along party lines.



House and Senate hold hearings on energy efficiency legislation

Date: Thursday, April 30, 2015

The House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee both held hearings on energy efficiency bills working their way through each chamber.



Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee holds hearing on BLM hydraulic fracturing rule

Date: Thursday, April 30, 2015

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on the Bureau of Land Management's new regulations for hydraulic fracturing on federal land.



House Science, Space, and Technology Committee passes NASA reauthorization bill cutting Earth science funding

Date: Thursday, April 30, 2015

The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee held a markup of the NASA Authorization Act for 2016 and 2017 (H.R.

2039).



Administration releases Quadrennial Energy Review

Date: Wednesday, April 29, 2015

The Obama Administration has introduced a Quadrennial Energy Review to address the future of energy transmission, storage, and infrastructure distribution in the U.S.



Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee holds hearing on Deepwater Horizon, five years later

Date: Wednesday, April 29, 2015

The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee held a hearing examining impacts and changes in the five years since the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.



Senate committee passes EPA reform act

Date: Tuesday, April 28, 2015

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee passed the Secret Science Reform Act (S.544).



USGS to incorporate induced seismicity in earthquake prediction modeling

Date: Thursday, April 23, 2015

The U.S. Geological Survey released a report on preliminary models of earthquakes triggered by human activity, or induced seismicity, to be added into U.S. hazard modeling.



House Science, Space, and Technology Committee passes COMPETES reauthorization bill cutting Geoscience Directorate funding

Date: Wednesday, April 22, 2015

The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee passed the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 1806) with a party-line vote.



House Science, Space, and Technology Committee Space Subcommittee holds hearing on President's FY 2016 NASA budget

Date: Thursday, April 16, 2015

The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee Space Subcommittee held a hearing on the President's fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget for NASA.



Representative Issa introduces Monuments Protection Act of 2015

Date: Thursday, April 16, 2015

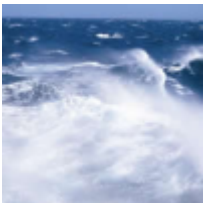
Representative Darrell Issa (R-CA) introduced the Monuments Protection Act of 2015 (H.R.1836) which would require federal departments to accept offers from local governments supporting access to public lands in the event of a funding lapse, such as a government shutdown.



House Appropriations Energy and Water Subcommittee passes funding bill

Date: Wednesday, April 15, 2015

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water passed a bill funding the Department of Energy and the National Nuclear Security Administration for fiscal year 2016 (H.R.2028).



GAO examines NOAA in annual report on duplication

Date: Tuesday, April 14, 2015

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released their fifth annual report on fragmentation, overlap, and duplication in government services.



Administration proposes new offshore drilling regulations

Date: Monday, April 13, 2015

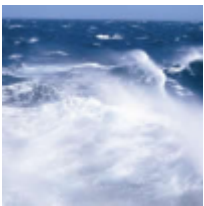
The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement proposed new regulations for offshore drilling.



Multi-agency partnership aims to understand harmful algal blooms

Date: Tuesday, April 7, 2015

A new \$3.6 million effort supports a partnership between NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Geological Survey to develop an early warning indicator for freshwater algal blooms.



President Obama and NOAA expand marine sanctuaries

Date: Tuesday, March 31, 2015

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced the expansion of the Gulf of the Farallones and the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries.



Senate budget amendments pass in "vote-a-rama"

Date: Friday, March 27, 2015

The Senate voted on a budget resolution for fiscal year 2016, and as part of this process, senators voted on many non-binding, germane amendments in a "vote-a-rama."



Shaheen-Portman energy efficiency bill passes Senate

Date: Friday, March 27, 2015

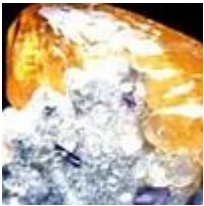
The Senate passed Senators Rob Portman and Jeanne Shaheen's Energy Efficiency Improvement Act of 2015 as part of the Senate "vote-a-rama"



Senate Commerce, Science, Transportation Subcommittee Holds Hearing on NASA's Budget

Date: Thursday, March 26, 2015

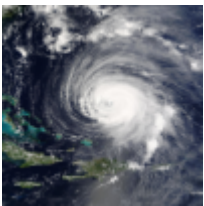
The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Science, Space, and Competitiveness held a hearing to review the President's fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget request for NASA.



Senator Murkowski introduces mineral security bill

Date: Thursday, March 26, 2015

Senator Lisa Murkowski introduced The American Mineral Security Act of 2015, a bill supporting the development of domestic supplies of critical minerals, as well as the infrastructure to support research and education



NOAA weather bill passes House Science, Space, and Technology Committee

Date: Wednesday, March 25, 2015

The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee passed the Weather Research and Forecast Innovation Act of 2015.



House Natural Resources subcommittee holds hearing on proposed USGS FY 2016 budget

Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2015

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a hearing on the President's fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget request.



Senate budget would change energy efficiency scoring

Date: Friday, March 20, 2015

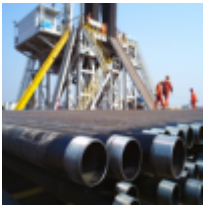
The Senate FY 2016 budget includes changes to the criteria for how the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) determines the impact of energy efficiency on the federal budget.



House passes two EPA reform bills

Date: Thursday, March 19, 2015

The House passed Representative Lamar Smith's (R-TX) Secret Science Reform Act of 2015 which impacts science used in Environmental Protection Agency rulemaking.



BLM introduces hydraulic fracturing regulations

Date: Thursday, March 19, 2015

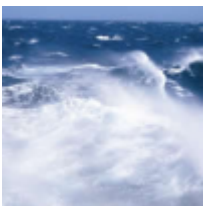
The Obama Administration and Bureau of Land Management introduced new regulations on hydraulic fracturing on federally-managed land.



Western Governors voice support for Wildfire Disaster Funding Act

Date: Thursday, March 19, 2015

The Western Governors' Association sent a letter to Congress expressing their support for two wildfire-related bills.



House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee held hearing on proposed NOAA FY 2016 budget

Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2015

The House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee met to discuss the President's proposed fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



House Appropriations subcommittee reviews proposed FY 2016 NSF budget

Date: Tuesday, March 17, 2015

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies held a hearing on the President's

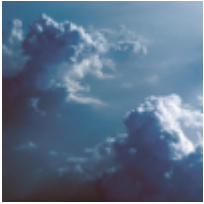
fiscal year 2016 budget request for the National Science Foundation.



Ashby named Director of Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2015

Michael Kluse, current Director of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), announced that Steven Ashby will take over as the new Director of PNNL on April 1 when Kluse retires.



NOAA issues advisory for weak El Niño

Date: Thursday, March 5, 2015

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issues an El Niño Advisory announcing that conditions for El Niño have been established.