

## 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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### **Oklahoma hit by magnitude-5.1 earthquake, calls for wastewater disposal cutbacks**

**Date:** Monday, February 15, 2016

One month after the Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) directed 27 oil and gas wastewater disposal wells to end wastewater injections, a magnitude-5.1 earthquake has shaken Fairview, Oklahoma.



### **DOD study finds certain rare earth minerals critical for defense**

**Date:** Monday, February 15, 2016

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has published a report detailing how the Department of Defense (DOD) can better manage supply chain risks for critical rare earth minerals and materials (rare earths).



### **“Keep It in the Ground Act” introduced in the House**

**Date:** Thursday, February 11, 2016

Congressman Jared Huffman (D-CA) introduced new legislation, along with 16 democratic co-sponsors, that would prohibit new drilling leases in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and new coal leases on federal land.



### **Scientific Research in the National Interest bill**

**Date:** Wednesday, February 10, 2016

The Scientific Research in the National Interest Act (H.R. 3293) passed the House of Representatives on February 10 with a vote of 236-178.



### **President Obama releases his final federal budget request**

**Date:** Tuesday, February 9, 2016

On February 9, President Obama announced his final federal budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2017.



### **House science committee discusses NSF management reform**

**Date:** Thursday, February 4, 2016

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Subcommittee on Research and Technology, held a hearing to discuss recommendations for management reform at the National Science Foundation (NSF).



### **House committee holds hearing on NASA human space exploration**

**Date:** Wednesday, February 3, 2016

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology met on February 3 to outline steps for future human exploration on the Moon and Mars.



### **Federal Register - January 2016**

**Date:** Monday, February 1, 2016

A list of notices from the federal register for January 2016 from agencies including the Department of the Interior, USGS, NOAA, NASA, and more.



### **The Energy Policy Modernization Act heads to the Senate floor**

**Date:** Friday, January 29, 2016

Last week the Senate began debate on the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015, the first major package of energy legislation considered in Congress since 2005.



### **BLM proposes methane reform to 30-year-old oil and gas regulations**

**Date:** Friday, January 22, 2016

The Bureau of Land Management is proposing an update to the 30-year-old regulations for oil and gas operations on federal and

Native American lands.



### **Oklahoma calls for a reduction in wastewater injection**

**Date:** Thursday, January 14, 2016

Oklahoma experienced a 50 percent increase in earthquakes magnitude-3 or greater last year—up from 585 in 2014 to 881 in 2015.



### **House passes bill blocking controversial stream rule**

**Date:** Wednesday, January 13, 2016

On January 13, the House passed H.R. 1644, legislation blocking the implementation of the controversial Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's (OSMRE) Stream Protection Rule.



### **House Science Committee marks up civilian nuclear energy bill**

**Date:** Tuesday, January 12, 2016

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology has voted to approve the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act (H.R. 4084), legislation aimed at increasing nuclear research within the Department of Energy (DOE).



### **January 2016 State of the Union from a geosciences perspective**

**Date:** Tuesday, January 12, 2016

This January, President Obama delivered his final State of the Union Address to Congress.



### **Carbonate growth rings on rocks tell about North America's climate past**

**Date:** Monday, January 11, 2016

According to a new study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences this January, growth rings on rocks may tell us about weather patterns from thousands of years ago.



#### **DOE will work to craft a strategy to dispose of nuclear waste in 2016**

**Date:** Monday, January 11, 2016

The Department of Energy (DOE) is launching an initiative to find a long-term solution for dealing with U.S. radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel.



#### **Science Advisory Board questions EPA hydraulic fracturing report**

**Date:** Friday, January 8, 2016

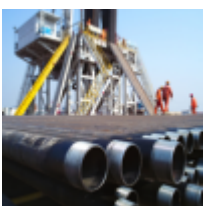
In response to an EPA study on hydraulic fracturing, the agency's Science Advisory Board (SAB), which provides independent scientific advice to the EPA, has submitted a critical draft letter expressing their concerns with the report's findings.



#### **Abandoned Mine Reclamation Safety Act seeks to prevent pollution, increase worker safety**

**Date:** Thursday, January 7, 2016

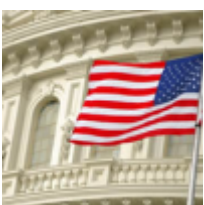
Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) has introduced a bill that would direct the Department of the Interior (DOI) to create environmentally responsible regulations for reopening abandoned mines.



#### **Oil and gas companies cutting production and workers**

**Date:** Thursday, January 7, 2016

The price of oil fell to \$38 per barrel in December 2015, leading to massive cuts in the industry's budget and workforce.



#### **Federal Register - December 2015**

**Date:** Friday, January 1, 2016

A list of notices from the federal register for December 2015 from agencies including the Department of the Interior, USGS, NOAA, NASA, and more.



### **Congress passes FY 2016 omnibus spending bill increasing funding for geosciences**

**Date:** Friday, December 18, 2015

On December 18, Congress passed an omnibus spending bill providing funding for the federal government through September 30, 2016.



### **Dr. Suzette Kimball confirmed as Director of the U.S. Geological Survey**

**Date:** Friday, December 18, 2015

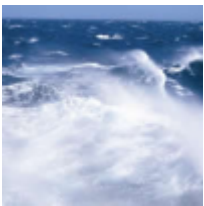
The Senate has finally confirmed Dr. Suzette M. Kimball as Director of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).



### **House Committee holds underground hearing on mining workforce, education**

**Date:** Monday, December 14, 2015

On December 14, the House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a field hearing at an unconventional location, the underground classroom of the Edgar Mine at the Colorado School of Mines Experimental Mine in Idaho Springs, Colorado.



### **Legislators call for a halt to Atlantic seismic surveys**

**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2015

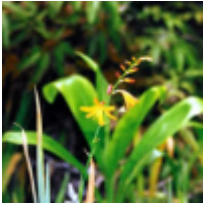
In a bipartisan letter addressed to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Reps. Mark Sanford (R-SC) and Bobby Scott (D-VA) called for a halt in seismic testing on the outer continental shelf of the Atlantic Ocean.



### **President signs bill strengthening K-12 STEM education**

**Date:** Thursday, December 10, 2015

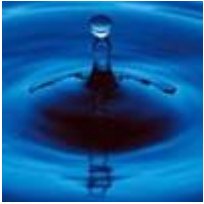
On December 10, the President signed the Student Success Act (S.1177) into law



### **Sen. Sanders and others introduce bills supporting transition to clean energy**

**Date:** Tuesday, December 8, 2015

Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) introduced two bills on investment in renewable energy tax credits and the state of jobs in the coal mining industry.



### **House passes bill which bans the use of microbeads**

**Date:** Tuesday, December 8, 2015

The Microbead-Free Waters Act (H.R. 1321) passed the House by a voice-vote on December 7, 2015. H.R. 1321 attempts to lower the negative environmental impacts that synthetic microbeads have on water pollution.



### **Federal Register - November 2015**

**Date:** Monday, December 7, 2015

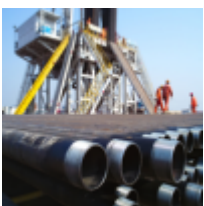
A list of notices from the federal register for November 2015 from agencies including the Department of the Interior, USGS, NOAA, NASA, and more.



### **NDAA includes provision supporting conference travel for scientists**

**Date:** Friday, December 4, 2015

The fiscal year (FY) 2016 National Defense Authorization Act (S. 1356), which normally focuses on the Department of Defense, included provisions supporting scientific research and collaboration among all federal science agencies.



### **House passes bill amending the Natural Gas Act**

**Date:** Thursday, December 3, 2015

H.R. 8, or the North American Energy Security and Infrastructure Act, passed the House on December 3, 2015.



#### **House legislation introduced that will allow farmers tax breaks for water conservation**

**Date:** Thursday, December 3, 2015

Rep. Rick Crawford (R-AR) introduced the Groundwater Conservation Incentive Act (H.R. 4175) on December 3, which would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.



#### **New DOE funding opportunity hopes to spur retrieval of rare earths and other critical materials from geothermal fluids**

**Date:** Tuesday, December 1, 2015

The Department of Energy (DOE) Geothermal Technologies Office announced funding for a new program to explore the potential for recovering rare earth elements and other critical materials from dissolved geothermal fluids and high temperature brines.



#### **Update to USGCRP Strategic Plan published in the Federal Register**

**Date:** Tuesday, December 1, 2015

The U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) released a triennial update to their 2012-2021 strategic plan this December.



#### **Congress approves legislation to legalize space mining**

**Date:** Wednesday, November 25, 2015

The U.S. Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act (H.R. 2262) passed the Senate and House of Representatives and was signed into law by the President on November 25.



#### **White House announces federal agencies' greenhouse gas emissions targets for 2016**



**Date:** Monday, November 23, 2015

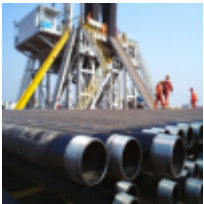
The Obama Administration released an executive order today outlining new greenhouse gas emissions targets for federal agencies for 2016.



### **Sportsmen's Act approved by Senate Energy and Natural Resources includes amendment to renew LWCF**

**Date:** Thursday, November 19, 2015

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee approved the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act (S. 556) on November 19.



### **Senators introduce legislation that will finance carbon capture and storage projects**

**Date:** Thursday, November 19, 2015

Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Rob Portman (R-OH) introduced legislation on November 19, 2015 that allows industrial facilities to finance the purchase and installation of carbon capture and storage (CCS) equipment.



### **Senate bill would increase tech transfer from DOE's national labs to the marketplace**

**Date:** Wednesday, November 18, 2015

Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) released a bill known as the Accelerating Technology Transfer to Advance Innovation for the Nation (ATTAIN) Act (S.\_\_\_\_) on November 17.



### **House passes legislation preparing the nation for an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) event**

**Date:** Tuesday, November 17, 2015

The Critical Infrastructure Protection Act of 2015 (H.R. 1073) passed the House on November 17; the bill aims to prepare the nation in the event of an electromagnetic pulse (EMP).



## **DOE partners with cities and states to share energy data via open-source software**

**Date:** Tuesday, November 10, 2015

The Department of Energy, in collaboration with the National League of Cities and the National Association of State Energy Officials, is launching a data-sharing program aimed at enhancing energy efficiency in buildings and lowering costs throughout the U.S.



## **White House Wildland Fire Science and Technology Task Force calls for increased communication about wildfire mitigation research**

**Date:** Tuesday, November 10, 2015

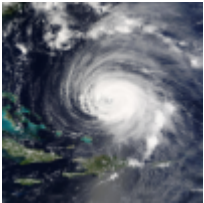
The Wildland Fire Science and Technology Task Force, chartered under the National Science and Technology Council's Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction, released a report in conjunction with the Fire Chiefs' White House Roundtable recommending better communication between federal agencies that gather research on wildfire mitigation and response and the people that use the research to inform policy makers.



## **President Obama rejects the Keystone XL pipeline**

**Date:** Friday, November 6, 2015

President Obama announced his rejection of the construction of TransCanada Corporation's Keystone XL pipeline this November.



## **House Science Committee leads investigations into NOAA climate study**

**Date:** Thursday, November 5, 2015

Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX) of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee is leading an investigation into the validity of a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) study claiming that a previously believed pause in global warming was in fact incorrect, and that the rate of warming over the past 15 years has been the same as the rest of the 20th century.



## **Senate introduces hardrock mining legislation regarding cleanup royalties for abandoned mines**

**Date:** Thursday, November 5, 2015

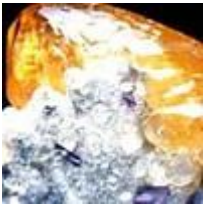
Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) and other Democratic senators introduced legislation requiring mining companies to pay royalties for abandoned hardrock mine cleanup efforts.



#### **Draft bill introduced to reform and reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund**

**Date:** Thursday, November 5, 2015

The House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-UT) released a discussion draft of legislation titled, the Protecting America's Recreation and Conservation (PARC) Act, which aims to reform and reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).



#### **Hearing on H.R. 3844 to establish energy and minerals reclamation foundation**

**Date:** Wednesday, November 4, 2015

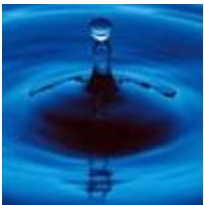
The House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a legislative hearing on November 4 to review proposed mining actions, including two bills concerning Good Samaritan cleanups.



#### **Federal Register - October 2015**

**Date:** Saturday, October 31, 2015

A list of notices from the federal register for October 2015 from agencies including the Department of the Interior, USGS, NOAA, NASA, and more.



#### **Addressing the drought in the Western United States: What is Congress doing about it?**

**Date:** Friday, October 30, 2015

The western United States is experiencing a historically persistent drought.



## **New legislation would measure the economic impact of outdoor recreation in the U.S.**

**Date:** Thursday, October 29, 2015

Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Cory Gardner (R-CO) introduced the Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act (S. 2219) on October 29.



## **New NPS rule proposes updating regulations governing non-federal oil and gas production**

**Date:** Monday, October 26, 2015

The National Park Service (NPS) has proposed a rule giving the agency greater oversight over the exercise of non-federal oil and gas rights on NPS land.