

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 engages scientific community on America COMPETES bill

Date: Friday, October 23, 2015

The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee recently concluded an outreach effort seeking feedback from the scientific community on the Senate version of the America COMPETES bill, which authorizes funding for the National Science Foundation, Department of Energy Office of Science, and other federal science programs.



House passes bill that allows for faster acquisition of mining permits

Date: Thursday, October 22, 2015

The House passed the National Strategic and Critical Minerals Production Act of 2015 (H.R. 1937) on October 22.



House Subcommittee addresses issues of abandoned mine cleanups by Good Samaritans

Date: Wednesday, October 21, 2015

The House Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment held a hearing to gather information on abandoned mine sites in the United States and the opportunities for Good Samaritan cleanups.



Senate Committee hearing on the nomination of Dr. Suzette Kimball for Director of the USGS

Date: Tuesday, October 20, 2015

On October 20, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to consider the nomination of Dr. Suzette M. Kimball to be Director of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).



Congressman Honda introduces Earth Science Week Resolution

Date: Thursday, October 8, 2015

Congressman Mike Honda (D-CA) introduced a resolution designating October 11-17, 2015 as Earth Science Week.



President signs the STEM Education Act of 2015 into law

Date: Thursday, October 8, 2015

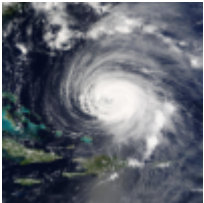
On October 8, 2015 President Obama signed into law the STEM Education Act of 2015 (H.R. 1020).



The Native American Energy Act passed House of Representatives

Date: Thursday, October 8, 2015

The Native American Energy Act (H.R. 538) passed the House of Representatives on October 8, 2015.



Informing the public of the science behind natural hazards

Date: Wednesday, October 7, 2015

The National Science Foundation (NSF) Directorate for Geosciences, NBC Learn, and the Weather Channel released a 10-part video series that delves into the science behind natural disasters.



Continuing Resolution will fund the federal government through Dec 11

Date: Wednesday, September 30, 2015

Congress narrowly avoided another government shutdown this September, as lawmakers agreed on a short-term funding bill that will keep the government open at least through mid-December.



New bill would draw on citizen science, crowdsourcing to solve national problems

Date: Wednesday, September 30, 2015

Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) has introduced a bill that would authorize and promote federal agencies to use citizen science and crowdsourcing to help solve problems within the federal government.



Land Water Conservation Fund expired September 30

Date: Wednesday, September 30, 2015

The Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a conservation program annually funded by royalties from offshore oil and gas production, expired on September 30, 2015.



Hearing Oct 20 to consider the nomination of Dr. Suzette Kimball to be Director of the USGS

Date: Wednesday, September 30, 2015

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee announced that it will hold a hearing on October 20 to consider the nomination of Dr. Suzette Kimball to be Director of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).



Federal Register - September 2015

Date: Wednesday, September 30, 2015

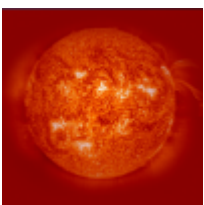
A list of notices from the federal register for September 2015 from agencies including the Department of the Interior, USGS, NOAA, NASA, and more.



NASA Orbiter may reveal liquid water on Mars

Date: Monday, September 28, 2015

In a recent mission, NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) used an imaging spectrometer to detect chemical signatures of hydrated salts concentrated in dark streaks along slopes on Mars's surface.



Vice President Biden and DOE announce funding for new SunShot Initiative

Date: Monday, September 21, 2015

On September 21, Vice President Joe Biden in coordination with the Department of Energy (DOE) announced the creation of a

new initiative to fund solar research and development in the United States.



House Energy and Commerce Committee approves legislation to undo crude oil export ban

Date: Thursday, September 17, 2015

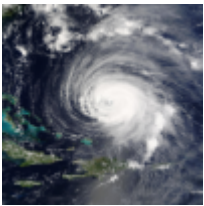
On September 17, The House Energy and Commerce Committee approved legislation amending the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (P.L. 94-163) to repeal the restriction on exporting crude oil in the United States.



New Executive Order aims to improve federal programs with social science research

Date: Wednesday, September 16, 2015

An Executive Order signed by President Obama on September 16 would direct federal agencies to identify programs that could benefit from social and behavioral science insights.



Congress reauthorizes the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program

Date: Wednesday, September 16, 2015

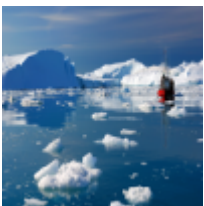
On September 16, Congress passed the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Act Reauthorization of 2015 (H.R. 23), which now awaits President Obama's signature.



DOE releases 2015 Quadrennial Technology Review

Date: Thursday, September 10, 2015

The Department of Energy (DOE) released their second Quadrennial Technology Review (QTR 2015) this September.



President Obama plans to accelerate the acquisition of a new U.S. icebreaker

Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2015

In order to keep up with increasing ship traffic in the Arctic Ocean, President Obama has announced his plan to accelerate the

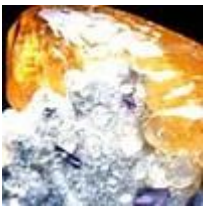
acquisition of a new heavy icebreaker for the United States.



Senators urge Congress to reform budgeting for wildfire suppression

Date: Friday, August 28, 2015

Senators on both sides of the aisle have urged Congress to reform the nation's budgeting for wildfire suppression, which currently requires the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to use funds from fire prevention and non-fire programs when fire suppression funding runs dry.



Court affirms decision to strike down SEC conflict mineral rule

Date: Tuesday, August 18, 2015

On August 18, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit voted 2–1 to affirm its prior decision to strike down a regulation in the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's (SEC) conflict mineral rule.



DOI approves drilling for oil in Chukchi Sea

Date: Monday, August 17, 2015

The Department of the Interior (DOI) approved Royal Dutch Shell PLC to drill for oil in the Chukchi Sea off the northwest coast of Alaska on August 17.



Senate confirms nominees to two DOE posts

Date: Wednesday, August 5, 2015

The Senate confirmed Monica Regalbuto as Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management and Jonathan Elkind as Assistant Secretary for International Affairs at the Department of Energy (DOE) on August 5.



Administration announces nominations for DOE and NSF posts

Date: Wednesday, August 5, 2015

President Obama announced the nomination of Cherry Murray as Director of the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Science and Richard Buckius as Deputy Director for the National Science Foundation (NSF) on August 5.



Report: USFS spending more than half of its budget to fight wildfires

Date: Wednesday, August 5, 2015

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) released a report on August 5 detailing the impacts of increasing costs of fighting wildfires on its non-fire work.



Administration releases final carbon rules for Clean Power Plan

Date: Monday, August 3, 2015

August 3, 2015



Energy and Natural Resources Committee passes comprehensive energy bill

Date: Thursday, July 30, 2015

On July 30, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed its Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015 (S.____), which addresses energy efficiency, infrastructure, supply, and government funding and oversight.



House bill would require NSF research grants to provide national interest justification

Date: Thursday, July 30, 2015

Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX) introduced the Scientific Research in the National Interest Act (H.R. ____) on July 30. The bill would require all National Science Foundation (NSF) grants to provide a non-technical explanation of the purpose of their research and explain how it serves the national interest.



California senators unveil drought relief bill

Date: Wednesday, July 29, 2015

July 29, 2015



USGS releases five-year plan to study Arctic

Date: Tuesday, July 28, 2015

On July 28, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) released its 2015-2020 plan for the Arctic region, focusing on coastal erosion and its effect on coastal communities.



House Committee hears Coast Guard testimony on Arctic icebreakers

Date: Monday, July 27, 2015

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation held a hearing on July 27 on the National Icebreaker Fund Act (H.R. 3214), which would fund construction and renovation of icebreakers as well as government leases on privately owned vessels.



House hears testimony on EPA Brownfields program

Date: Wednesday, July 22, 2015

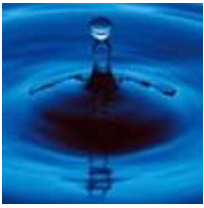
On July 22, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment heard testimony on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program and discussed potential improvements to the initiative.



House Committee hears testimony on Administration's proposed "social cost of carbon" rule

Date: Wednesday, July 22, 2015

The House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on July 22 to assess a proposed standard from the Environmental Protection Agency known as the social cost of carbon (SCC).



House passes California drought relief bill despite Administration veto threat

Date: Thursday, July 16, 2015

On July 16, the House passed the Western Waters and American Food Security Act of 2015 (H.R. 2898), largely along party lines. The bill addresses drought by laying the groundwork for new water storage projects in California and loosens environmental restrictions in the state.



House Subcommittee hears testimony on BLM hydraulic fracturing regulations

Date: Wednesday, July 15, 2015

At a July 15 hearing held by the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, Neil Kornze, Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), testified on BLM's proposed regulations for hydraulic fracturing on federal and tribal lands.



OCS seismic surveying hearing underscores differences in scientific opinion

Date: Tuesday, July 14, 2015

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources heard testimony from industry representatives and academics on the permitting process for seismic surveys to prospect for oil and gas.



Senate Committee hears testimony on America's role in the UN Climate Conference

Date: Wednesday, July 8, 2015

On July 8, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee heard testimony on the Administration's plans for the 2015 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris. As part of the conference, the Obama Administration intends to commit America to reducing carbon emissions by 26 percent by 2025.



Senate Committee seeks stakeholder input in preparation for COMPETES reauthorization

Date: Wednesday, July 8, 2015

Following the House's move in May to reauthorize the America COMPETES Act, the Senate has announced their intention to draft a version of the bill by this fall.



House Committee reviews success of Helium Stewardship Act

Date: Wednesday, July 8, 2015

On July 8, the House Natural Resources subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a hearing reviewing the year-old Helium Stewardship Act's (HSA) implementation.



House Natural Resources subcommittee holds hearing on National Critical Minerals bill

Date: Thursday, June 25, 2015

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Minerals heard testimony mostly in favor of H.R. 1937, the National Critical Minerals Act (NCMA), on June 25.



House bill addresses water infrastructure and drought mitigation in California and the West

Date: Thursday, June 25, 2015

On June 25, Representative David Valadao (R-CA) introduced H.R. 2898, entitled the "Western Water and American Food Security Act," in an effort mitigate the impacts of the drought in California and other Western states.



Energy Information Administration testifies on EPA Clean Power Plan to House Science, Space, and Technology subcommittees

Date: Wednesday, June 24, 2015

On June 24, the House Science, Space and Technology Subcommittees on Energy and the Environment held a joint hearing on the

impacts of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Power Plan (CPP) on the energy sector. The hearing focused on a new Energy Information Administration (EIA) report on the effectiveness of the CPP.



BLM's new hydraulic fracturing rules postponed pending court decision

Date: Wednesday, June 24, 2015

A federal judge for the U.S. District Court of Wyoming has placed a hold on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) new rules for hydraulic fracturing on federal lands.



House Interior and Environment Subcommittee approves FY 2016 Interior and Environment bill

Date: Tuesday, June 16, 2015

On June 16, the House Appropriations committee approved the fiscal year (FY) 2016 appropriations bill setting funding for the Department of the Interior (DOI), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Bureau of Land Management, and others by a 30-21 vote.



Senate Appropriations passes Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies spending bill

Date: Tuesday, June 16, 2015

On June 16, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a \$30 billion spending bill for Interior, Environment, and related agencies, which contains cuts to EPA funding.



House Natural Resources subcommittee holds hearing on proposed Arctic drilling regulations

Date: Tuesday, June 16, 2015

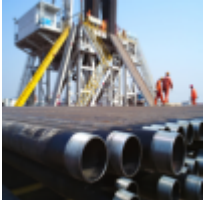
The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held an oversight hearing on "Arctic Resources and American Competitiveness" to discuss exploratory oil and gas drilling on the Arctic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).



Senate Appropriations passes FY 2016 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies bill

Date: Thursday, June 11, 2015

On June 11, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed its Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) funding bill for fiscal year (FY) 2016, one week after the House passed its own CJS bill.



Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee holds series of hearings on massive energy legislation package

Date: Tuesday, June 9, 2015

On June 9, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee completed its series of four hearings related to a new energy bill spearheaded by Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). Legislators on both sides of the aisle have proposed 114 bills spanning energy efficiency, infrastructure, supply, and accountability and reform to be considered as a part of Murkowski's larger energy legislation package, which she hopes to have completed before the end of the summer.



House bill would fund research into raw materials that fuel energy innovation

Date: Monday, June 8, 2015

Representative Eric Swalwell (D-CA) introduced The Securing Energy Critical Elements and American Jobs Act of 2015 (H.R. 2687) on June 8 to support research on Energy Critical Elements (ECEs).