

## House appropriations bill funding EPA and USGS passes subcommittee

July 9, 2014

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a markup on July 9 on the fiscal year (FY) 2015 Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill. The bill proposes a top-line appropriation of \$30.22 billion with \$1.036 billion allocated to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), which is \$4 million above the FY 2014 enacted levels but \$37 million below the President's request. Though USGS was not mentioned during the markup, the press release accompanying the draft bill states that "the bill prioritizes funding for programs dealing with natural hazards, stream gages, the groundwater monitoring network, mapping activities, and the earthquake early warning system."

The bill would fund the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at \$7.5 billion, a 9 percent cut from FY 2014. The EPA would be limited to a staff of 15,000, the lowest level since 1989. Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY) explained the EPA cuts saying, "Congress must exercise its prerogative to prevent this kind of bureaucratic overreach" that he believes is hurting the economy. Rep. Rogers also framed EPA cuts as a punishment for the agency's unresponsiveness to congressional inquiries.

Democrats found the funding levels in this bill to be insufficient for protecting natural resources and public health. Committee Ranking Member Nita Lowey (D-NY) stated, "Of the eleven FY 15 bills that have been released this is perhaps the worst." Rep. Lowey, together with Democrats on the subcommittee opposed the many legislative riders in the bill, calling them "an industry wish list of giveaways." The riders include provisions stopping the proposed changes to EPA emissions rules for power plants and preventing changes to the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act.

Democratic members explained they would hold off on proposing amendments until the full committee markup. The bill passed the subcommittee on a party line voice vote.

Sources: E&E News, House Committee on Appropriations

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