

Monthly Review: September 2012

The American Geosciences Institute's monthly review of geosciences and policy goes out to the leadership of AGI's member societies, members of the AGI Geoscience Policy Committee, and others as part of a continuing effort to improve communications about the role of geoscience in policy. The current monthly review and archived monthly reviews are all available online.

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1. Apply for AGI's Spring Internship by October 15

The American Geosciences Institute's Geoscience Policy offers spring and summer internship opportunities for geoscience students (undergraduates and/or Masters students) with an interest in public policy and in how Washington impacts the geoscience community. Interns gain a first-hand understanding of the legislative process and the operation of executive branch agencies while

enhancing their writing, research, and web publishing skills. Deadlines for online submission of applications are October 15, 2012 for spring 2013, March 15, 2013 for summer, and April 15, 2013 for fall.

The American Geophysical Union, the Soil Science Society of America, the American Institute of Physics, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Chemical Society offer similar internships that may be of interest to geoscience students. Please visit their web sites or contact AGI at govt@agiweb.org for more information.

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2. Presidential Candidates Respond to Major Science Questions

Presidential candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney responded to 14 major science questions formulated by the American Geosciences Institute and other top scientific societies. The effort was led by ScienceDebate.org and *Scientific American* magazine served as the media partner for the endeavor.

In his responses, Obama stated that, “We can work together to create an economy built on American manufacturing, American energy, and skills for American workers.” Obama said he would ensure America’s position as a world leader in innovation by increasing funding to research agencies and training more science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) teachers. He said his “all-of-the above” energy strategy coupled with greenhouse gas emission and energy efficiency standards would reduce dependence on foreign oil while addressing climate change. Obama pointed to the awarding of grants to water conservation projects, establishment of the National Ocean Policy and setting the goal of sending humans to an asteroid by 2025 during his Administration as evidence of his support for clean water, ocean health and space exploration. In response to a question on how the candidates would ensure the best available science would be used to inform policy and regulatory decisions, Obama pointed to his transparency initiatives enacted during his first term and reiterated that scientific data should not be distorted, concealed, or completed without public input. Obama explained that by using natural resources more efficiently and developing alternatives, the U.S. can be less reliant on other countries such as China for rare earth materials.

In a slight reversal from comments made in August, 2011, Romney answered a question about climate change by saying the “world is getting warmer, that human activity contributes to that warming, and that policymakers should therefore consider the risk of negative consequences.” However, Romney stated that there is “a lack of scientific consensus” on the extent of the human contribution and the severity of the risk. Instead of implementing a carbon tax or a cap and trade scheme, Romney said he would support a “No Regrets” policy that would reduce emissions while benefitting America “regardless of whether the risks of global warming materialize.” He cites “robust” government funding on low emissions technology research and development and energy efficiency as steps to lower greenhouse gas emissions while benefitting the American economy. Romney described how by reducing regulations and reforming K-12 education he would promote innovation and stimulate the economy. Romney expressed his support for federal research and stated that the government should ensure “that major breakthroughs are able to make the leap from the laboratory to the marketplace.” In regards to water and critical natural resources, Romney discussed how laws protecting air and water are important but need to be reformed so they do not “delay progress.” On the role of science in public policy, Romney explained that he “will ensure that the best available scientific and technical information guides decision-making in my Administration, and avoid the manipulation of science for political gain.”

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3. Appropriations Update for September 2012

In September, Congress passed a continuing resolution (CR, H.J. Res. 117) to fund the government through March 2013, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released a report on the estimated percent reductions for exempt and non-exempt discretionary and mandatory spending, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s (AAAS) Research and Development Budget and Policy Program released an analysis of the impacts of sequestration on federal science budgets. The Senate Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee released a draft FY 2013 appropriations bill which would increase funding for the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Because none of the 12 appropriations bills for fiscal year (FY) 2013 were completed before Congress went on recess in September, the House and Senate were forced to pass the CR to continue funding the government before the end of the fiscal year on September 30. The CR funds federal agencies through March 2013 at a 0.6 percent increase over FY 2012 levels.

As required by the Sequestration Transparency Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-577), OMB released a report in September which found defense programs would be reduced by 9.4 percent while nondefense programs would be reduced by 8.2 percent if the sequestration were enacted. AAAS analyzed this report and produced a brief estimating the total cuts to federal R&D spending over the next five years if the sequestration were implemented under several scenarios. The brief, titled “Federal R&D and Sequestration in the First Five Years,” presents reduction estimates for science agencies under the spending caps agreed to in the

Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25), under the spending caps plus an equal allocation sequestration, and with the spending caps plus a nondefense only sequestration scenario.

On September 25, the Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies released its FY 2013 draft spending bill. Though Congress has already passed the CR to fund the government through March 2013, Subcommittee Chairman Jack Reed (D-RI) and Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) indicated they hope the draft will serve as a roadmap for future spending discussions. An analysis of the draft bill's figures for the USGS and a comparison to the House and President's numbers can be found on the American Geosciences Institute's Geoscience Policy Appropriations web site for the Department of the Interior.

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4. House Passes Government Spending Accountability Act of 2012

On September 11, 2012, the House passed the Government Spending Accountability (GSA) Act of 2012 (H.R. 4631) introduced by Representative Joe Walsh (R-IL). The bill limits travel expenses for government employees and aims to make agency spending more transparent.

H.R. 4631 does not impose a limit on the number of conferences a federal employee can attend. However, federal agencies must cap their travel expenses for government employees to attend a conference (defined as a meeting, retreat, seminar or symposium that is not entirely held in a government facility and requires 25 miles or more of travel) at 70 percent of the aggregate amount of such expenses in the fiscal year (FY) 2010 and spend no more than \$500,000 for a single conference. This bill must now pass in the Senate before becoming law.

In addition, federal agencies must report travel expenses quarterly on their public web site including an itemized description of these expenses for conferences that 50 or more employees attend or costs more than \$100,000. This bill was drafted in response to the General Services Administration (GSA) scandal of 2012 when it was revealed that the GSA cost taxpayers \$823,000 for a 2010 conference in Las Vegas.

In April, the Senate passed (S.1789), the 21st Century Postal Service Act of 2012, which included Senate Amendment 2060 which includes similar language to H.R.4631, but would limit spending to 80 percent of the FY 2010 budget for travel expenses. This bill has not been passed in the House.

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5. Republican Bill Would Reform EPA Science Advisory Board

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology Chairman Ralph Hall (R-TX) has introduced a bill to change the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Science Advisory Board (SAB). The EPA Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2012 (H.R. 6564) would increase public comment opportunities, strengthen peer review requirements, and require disclosure of uncertainties surrounding scientific findings and conclusions. The bill is cosponsored by Representatives Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), Andy Harris (R-MD), and Dan Benishek (R-MI).

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6. House Republicans Introduce Space Leadership Preservation Act of 2012

Before leaving for recess, Representatives John Culberson (R-TX), Frank Wolf (R-VA), James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), Bill Posey (R-FL), Lamar Smith (R-TX), and Pete Olson (R-TX) announced the Space Leadership Preservation Act of 2012. Under the bill, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) would be managed by an 11 member board of directors who would be responsible for selecting three candidates to serve as NASA administrator, preparing an annual budget and quadrennial review of current space programs, and releasing an annual report on the health of the U.S. space workforce.

The House of Representatives, Senate, and President of the United States would be responsible for appointing the members of the board of directors who must be "former astronauts or scientists or engineers eminent in the fields of human spaceflight, planetary science, space science, Earth science, and aeronautics, or other scientific, engineering, business, and social science disciplines related to space and aeronautics." The board of directors would be required under the bill to formulate a budget proposal which "shall be based on the recommendations of the most recent National Research Council decadal surveys." The bill has not yet been introduced.

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7. Hall and Boren Introduce Bill to Reauthorize NIDIS

On September 21, 2012, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee Chairman Ralph Hall (R-TX) and Representative Dan Boren (D-OK) introduced the National Integrated Drought Information System Reauthorization Act of 2012 (H.R. 6489) which would reauthorize the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) through 2017.

NIDIS, first authorized in 2006, consolidates and distributes drought-related data across the federal government on an ongoing basis. The bill encourages further development of drought early warning systems. In addition, the bill calls for an analysis of the

implementation of NIDIS to date and would identify monitoring, research and forecasting needs to amplify the predictive capability of early warning systems.

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8. Library of Congress Unveils New Web Site to replace THOMAS

On September 19, 2012, the Library of Congress launched the beta version of Congress.gov as the search engine for federal U.S. legislation to eventually replace THOMAS.gov which was launched in 1995.

Notable features of Congress.gov include a more user friendly interface which allows users to search all content across all available years, narrow and refine results, and use the site on a mobile device more effectively. The new web site will provide consistent and permanent URLs. Additional data that will be available on Congress.gov include the Congressional Record, Congressional reports, the Congressional Record Index, House and Senate Calendars, nominations and treaties.

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9. NSF Moves Office of Polar Programs into Directorate for Geosciences

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has realigned four program offices including transferring the Office of Polar Programs (OPP) into the Directorate for Geosciences (GEO).

NSF announced the realignment plan to reduce the number of NSF offices and directorates on September 7 and the plan went into effect October 1. OPP is now a division within GEO instead of its own division within the Office of the Director. Similarly, the Office of International Science and Engineering and the Office of Integrative Activities have merged to become the Office of International and Integrative Activities. The Office of Cyberinfrastructure has become a division within the Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering. These changes have been made “to maximize research and education outcomes for science and engineering, while enhancing NSF's operational agility.

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10. NOAA Eliminates Climate Monitoring at Several Ground Stations

Citing an uncertain fiscal future and an inadequate budget, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Earth System Research Laboratory (ESRL) Global Monitoring Division has stopped measuring greenhouse gas levels at 12 surface flask-sampling sites, reduced aircraft monitoring, and halted planned growth in the tall tower program.

The Global Monitoring Division measures greenhouse gas concentrations at sites around the globe through their Cooperative Air Sampling Network made up of the ESRL observatories, surface flask-sampling, the tall tower network, and airborne flask-sampling. Airborne flask-sampling collects 12 samples at different altitudes up to 43,500 feet to record a complete vertical profile. Surface flask-sampling is done by trained volunteers and scientists who collect air samples in flasks at 71 active sites around the globe. The flasks collected from both airborne and surface sampling are sent back to a central facility in Boulder, Colorado where they are analyzed for about 55 different greenhouse gases.

In a letter to *Science* Magazine published on August 31, several researchers write that the budget cuts at NOAA have “resulted in curtailment of our ability to observe and understand changes to the global carbon cycle” at a time when greenhouse gas observation is critical to humanity. As a result of Congress passing a continuing resolution (H.J. Res 117) on September 22, NOAA will see their budget extended for six months at fiscal year (FY) 2012 levels. Congress appropriated \$4,975 million for NOAA in FY 2012, over \$500 million less than the President's FY 2012 request.

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11. Arctic Sea Ice Shrinks to Record Low in September 2012

Arctic sea ice has reached a new record low in the history of the satellite record during this year's summertime minimum extent. On September 16, 2012, the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC), measured the sea ice extent to be 3.41 million square kilometers and 760,000 square kilometers, or 22 percent, below the previous minimum extent measured on September 18, 2007. As of September 16, Arctic sea ice covered only 49 percent of the average extent from 2000 to 1979, when satellite record began. This minimum occurred after a very strong storm blew over the central Arctic Ocean in early August. Climate scientists are concerned that the Arctic sea ice may melt much faster than predicted. In addition, the melting of Arctic sea ice may be altering the jet stream and causing more severe weather. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) released a satellite image of the Arctic sea ice extent on September 16 compared to the average minimum extent over the last 30 years.

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12. Department of Energy Embarks on Long Term Atmosphere Observing Mission

On October 1, the Department of Energy (DOE) launched a mobile laboratory aboard a 852-foot container ship to conduct a yearlong project called the Marine ARM GPCI Investigation of Clouds (MAGIC). DOE's Atmospheric Radiation Measurement (ARM) Climate Research Facility is a scientific user facility designed to provide the climate research community with observatories to improve the understanding and representation of clouds and aerosols in climate and Earth system models. The seafaring lab will travel between Los Angeles, California and Honolulu, Hawaii while measuring the atmosphere from the bottom up and tracking how clouds form and disperse. The equipment aboard the ship will measure black carbon, aerosols, cloud stacks, ozone, light transmission, wind speeds, and temperatures. Overall, the mission hopes to improve the representation of the stratocumulus-to-cumulus transition in climate models. The insights gained from the project could help modelers develop a more accurate projection of future global climate.

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13. International Ocean Discovery Program Releases 10-year Science Plan

The upcoming International Ocean Discovery Program (IODP), currently the Integrated Ocean Drilling Program, has released its 2013-2023 science plan titled, "Illuminating Earth's Past, Present and Future." The new IODP will operate from 2013-2023 and explore four scientific themes - Climate and Ocean Change: Reading the Past, Informing the Future; Biosphere Frontiers: Deep Life and Environmental Forcing of Evolution; Earth Connections: Deep Processes and Their Impact on Earth's Surface Environment; and Earth in Motion: Processes and Hazards on Human Time Scales.

The new IODP will provide deep sea sediments which allow scientists to explore climate and ocean change questions regarding how the Earth's climate system responds to elevated levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide, how ice sheets and sea level will respond, what controls regional patterns of precipitation, such as those associated with monsoons or El Niño, and how resilient the ocean is to chemical perturbations.

Data and samples that will be collected throughout this 10-year program are designed to explore biosphere questions pertaining to the origin, composition and global significance of deep seafloor communities, what the limits of life in the seafloor realm are, and how sensitive ecosystems and biodiversity are to environmental change.

For the first time, IODP will "pursue the challenge of penetrating the 5-6 km thick oceanic crust and directly sampling ...the underlying mantle from which all oceanic crust, and much of the continental crust, is derived." This effort is part of the geodynamics theme which is designed to explore what the composition, structure, and dynamics of the upper mantle are; how seafloor spreading and mantle melting are linked to ocean crustal architecture; what the mechanisms, magnitude and history of chemical exchanges between the oceanic crust and seawater are; and how subduction zones initiate, cycle volatiles and generate continental crust.

Under the geohazards theme, IODP ocean drilling experiments will provide tools to discover what mechanisms control the occurrence of destructive earthquakes, landslides and tsunamis; what properties and processes govern the flow and storage of carbon in the seafloor; and how fluids link seafloor tectonic, thermal and biogeochemical processes.

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14. NASA Releases Mars Program Planning Group Summary Report

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) released their Mars Program Planning Group (MPPG) summary report. A final report is expected in mid- to late October.

The summary report outlines four options for retrieving samples from Mars while providing flexibility and resiliency in light of NASA's fiscal challenges. It addresses the options for gradually increasing human involvement in Mars exploration to meet President Obama's mandate of achieving human exploration of Mars in the 2030s.

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15. U.S., Canada sign Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

Canada and the U.S. signed an amended version of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement on September 7, 2012. The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, first signed in 1972 and last amended in 1987, is a commitment by both nations to restore and maintain the Great Lakes which contain 21 percent of the world's fresh surface water.

New requirements address the nearshore environment, threats from invasive species such as the Asian carp, habitat degradation and climate change and the amendments support continued work on existing threats to people's health and the environment such as harmful algae, toxic chemicals, and discharges from vessels.

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16. NSF GEO Seeks Input on Changes to Education and Diversity Programs

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has revised their portfolio of investments related to geoscience education and diversity. Affected programs include, Geoscience Education (GeoEd), Opportunities for Enhancing Diversity in the Geosciences (OEDG)

and Geoscience Teacher Training (GEO-Teach).

Several recent reports concerning science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and workforce needs have prompted NSF to re-invigorate and strengthen funding opportunities that support advancements in STEM education. In light of these evolving NSF-wide priorities, GEO has rebalanced investments related to geoscience education.

As part of the rebalance, GEO-Teach has been retired, GeoEd is undergoing significant review and restructuring, and the current solicitation of GeoEd has been archived. In addition, a revised OEDG solicitation will be issued in fiscal year 2013 (FY 2013). NSF is seeking comments regarding efforts to engage, recruit, and retain underrepresented students in the geosciences and broaden public Earth System Science literacy among diverse communities as well as how to best engage relevant stakeholders and communities for addressing those needs given budgetary constraints. These comments, due November 1, 2012, are intended to help shape the direction of a revised OEDG program.

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17. Court Rules UVA Does Not Have to Publicize Mann Emails

A Virginia Court ruled on September 17, 2012 that the University of Virginia (UVA) does not have to release emails between climate scientist and then UVA professor Michael Mann and other scientists to the American Tradition Institute (ATI).

Judge Paul Sheridan withheld the right of the university to keep scholarly communications private. Mann's emails were central in the November 2009 "Climategate" scandal in which hackers obtained thousands of climate scientists' emails and published them on the web. These emails were used by climate skeptics to discredit the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2007 Report which states that "warming of the climate system is unequivocal" and that human caused greenhouse gas emissions are "very likely" the predominant driver of increased global average temperatures.

Mann is now a researcher at Pennsylvania State University (PSU) and has been cleared of any misconduct after several independent investigations. Mann is well known as one of the creators of the "hockey stick" figure which shows relatively stable surface temperatures from year 1400 until a dramatic increase in the 20th century during the industrial revolution. The "hockey stick" figure was featured in the 2001 IPCC report.

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18. Shell Delays Summer Drilling in Beaufort and Chukchi Seas

After initially planning to complete five wells in the summer of 2012, Royal Dutch Shell PLC announced on September 17, it will forgo oil drilling in Alaska's Beaufort and Chukchi Seas for the 2012 season because of damage to key oil spill response equipment.

Shell officials said the company's containment dome was damaged during the final tests aboard the *Arctic Challenger* and will not have enough time to make repairs before the drilling window closes in 2012. However, Shell has been permitted by the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) to drill top holes, shallow exploratory wells that stop short of oil-bearing rock, through October in the Beaufort Sea. This is expected to help accelerate drilling activities next summer.

This decision marks yet another setback for Shell, which has already spent \$4.5 billion and six years of legal challenges and delays related to ice and construction problems to drill into these oil rich regions. According to the U.S Geological Survey, the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas could hold as much as 27 billion barrels of oil and 132 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

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19. UCAR, Weather Coalition Hold Briefing to Call for U.S. Weather Commission

In a briefing on September 27, 2012, speakers from the National Weather Service, Global Weather Corporation, Northrop Grumman, and University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR) addressed a recent National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report, titled "Weather Services for the Nation: Becoming Second to None," and called for the creation of the first U.S. Weather Commission.

The NAS report investigates current challenges facing the National Weather Services (NWS) and recommends solutions to improve it. NWS is a weather monitoring program under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The key challenges identified in the report are using the most advanced technology and science, providing information quickly and efficiently, and partnering with the wealth of organizations which can provide information to NWS. The report recommends the NWS identify and improve its unique capabilities, reorganize its functional structure and collaborate with the growing private sector investigating weather phenomena.

The U.S. Weather Commission as envisioned would advise federal policymakers on setting national priorities for improving weather forecasts and creating a more weather-resilient nation.

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20. Report Says Government Science Advisory Panels Need Greater Transparency

The Research Integrity Roundtable released a report on September 18 which recommends key procedures, policies, and protocols

to help improve scientific processes which advise important regulatory decisions.

The report, titled “Improving the Use of Science in Regulatory Decision-Making: Dealing with Conflict of Interest and Bias in Scientific Advisory Panels, and Improving Scientific Reviews,” found that “the regulatory process is better when there is more consistent and greater transparency in selecting panels, and when there is consistent, transparent, and systematic review and evaluation of the scientific literature.” As part of the report, the Roundtable developed best practices for establishing, selecting, managing, and evaluating scientific advisory panels for consideration and adoption by agencies. These include recommendations for every aspect of a scientific panel from establishing such panel, selecting the individual panelists, managing and balancing bias, and evaluating the panel. The report was based on the Bipartisan Policy Center’s 2009 report, “Science for Policy Project: Improving the Use of Science in Regulatory Policy.”

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21. Columbia University Geoscientist Awarded MacArthur Genius Grant

Geochemist Terry Plank has been awarded a \$500,000 MacArthur Genius Fellowship for her work in the field of volcanism. Plank is currently a researcher at Columbia University’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory where she and her colleagues are currently studying Guatemala’s Volcán Fuego and Hawaii’s Kilauea. Her work includes contributions to understanding explosive volcanism and the amount of carbon dioxide and water in magma prior to eruption.

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22. AGI Welcomes 2012 AAPG/AGI Fall Intern Kathryn Kynett

The American Geosciences Institute welcomes Kathryn Kynett from Sacramento, California as its 2012 AAPG/AGI Fall Geoscience and Public Policy Intern.

Kathryn graduated in 2010 with a B.S. in Earth Sciences and a concentration in Environmental Geology from the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC). She received honors for her senior thesis which investigated the influence of ocean acidification and anoxia on marine invertebrate ecology during the Permian—Triassic Extinction. Kathryn recently defended her M.S. thesis in Geosciences at San Francisco State University (SFSU). Her M.S. thesis focuses on understanding the Pliocene warm period through utilizing Mg/Ca and oxygen isotope values of planktonic foraminifera to reconstruct thermocline depth in the south Atlantic subtropical gyre over the past four million years. She has been awarded an Achievement Reward for College Scientists (ARCS) Foundation award for her research as well as the James C. Kelley Scholarship and a Pestrong Research Grant. Kathryn has worked at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, at the California Academy of Sciences and as a teaching assistant at SFSU. Kathryn’s interests include science policy, paleoclimatology, oceanography, remote sensing, water and energy resources as well as geoscience education.

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25. Key Reports and Publications

*****Government Accountability Office (GAO)*****

Spent Nuclear Fuel: Accumulating Quantities at Commercial Reactors Present Storage and Other Challenges

In this report, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) was asked to examine the amount of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) expected to accumulate before it can be moved from commercial nuclear reactor sites, the key risks posed by stored SNF and actions to help mitigate these risks, and key benefits and challenges of moving SNF out of wet storage and ultimately away from commercial nuclear reactors. GAO found that new storage facilities may take 15-40 years before they are ready to accept SNF and several more decades to ship the SNF to the facility. In this time, the amount of SNF stored on-site at commercial nuclear reactors is expected to reach about 140,000 metric tons.

*****National Academy of Sciences (NAS)*****

The Effects of Solar Variability on Earth’s Climate: A Workshop Report

The National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Boulder, Colorado held a workshop on September 8-9, 2011 to discuss solar variability and this report is a summary of the workshop’s discussions. This report includes background information regarding the potential for solar influences on climate, the observational record from space, the potential perturbations of climate due to long-term solar variability and scientific questions posed by the participants for potential future research endeavors.

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26. Key Federal Register Notices

EO – This President proclaimed September 2012 National Wilderness Month. [Thursday, September 6, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 174)]

NASA – The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Applied Science Advisory Group (ASAG) Subcommittee of the Earth Science Subcommittee is holding a meeting on October 9 and 10. This meeting is open to the public and further

details can be found in the notice. [Tuesday, September 11, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 177)]

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is holding an external peer review meeting for the draft framework for human health risk assessment to inform decision making. The meeting is on October 9 and is open to the public. Further details can be found in the notice. [Wednesday, September 12, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 178)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is finalizing the amendments for new Standards of Performance for Petroleum Refineries. This affects petroleum refinery process units constructed, reconstructed or modified after May 14, 2007. The rule is effective November 13. [Wednesday, September 12, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 178)]

EO – This notice issued by the President outlines changes in the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. [Thursday, September 13, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 179)]

EPA – Notice that deadlines have been established for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to take action on the Clean Air Act Citizen Suit. [Friday, September 14, 2012 (Volume 77, 180)]

ED – This U.S. Department of Education Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is seeking comments on the Institute of Education Sciences Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013 Main Study. Comments are due October 17. [Monday, September 17, 2012 (Volume 77 Number 181)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is holding a meeting for a Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB) public teleconference on water infrastructure in the U.S.-Mexico border region on October 2. Further details can be found in the notice. [Monday, September 17, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 181)]

NOAA – The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program (DARRP) is announcing new indirect cost rates on the recovery of indirect costs for its component organizations involved in natural resource damage assessment and restoration activities for fiscal year (FY) 2011. [Monday, September 17, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 181)]

NSF – The National Science Foundation (NSF) Advisory Committee for Geosciences is holding a meeting on October 10 through October 11. This meeting is open to the public and further details can be found in the notice. [Monday, September 17, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 181)]

BOEMRE – Environmental documents prepared for mineral proposals by the Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) region are now available from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE). [Tuesday, September 18, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 182)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) notice of a final rule that requires the National Oil and Hazardous Substances (NCP) to provide a list of national priorities for the known or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants throughout the United States. This rule goes into effect October 18, 2012. [Tuesday, September 18, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 182)]

NASA – The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced an Earth Science Subcommittee of the NASA Advisory Council (NAC) meeting. The meeting will be on October 10 and open to the public. Details can be found in the notice. [Thursday, September 20, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 184)]

NASA – The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced a Heliophysics Subcommittee of the NASA Advisory Council (NAC) meeting. The meeting will be held on October 10 through 12 and is open to the public. Details can be found in the notice. [Thursday, September 20, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 184)]

NOAA – The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced a NOAA Science Advisory Board meeting. The meeting will be held on October 9 and will be partially available to the public. Details can be found in the notice. [Thursday, September 20, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 184)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced significant new use rules (SNURs) under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) for 107 chemical substances which were the subject of premanufacture notices (PMNs). The rules will go into effect on November 20. [Friday, September 21, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 185)]

BLM – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced a correction to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) which pertains to oil and shale management. Details can be found in the announcement. [Monday, September 24, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 186)]

BSEE – The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) is seeking comments on revision to the paperwork requirements for oil and gas production regulations. Comments are due November 26. [Wednesday, September 26, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 188)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized the determination of the applicable volume of biomass-based diesel to be used in setting annual percentage standards as 1.28 billion gallons for 2013. [Thursday, September 27, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 189)]

NPS – The National Park Service (NPS) Advisory Board will meet on November 28 and 29. Interested parties may attend. Details can be found in the notice. [Thursday, September 27, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 189)]

EO – The Executive Office (EO) of the President has established Chimney Rock as a National Monument. [Thursday, September 27, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 189)].

NPS – The National Park Service (NPS) will hold a meeting November 28 through 29. Interested parties may attend and more information can be found in the notice [Thursday, September 27, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 189)].

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27. Key AGI Geoscience Policy Updates

- **Hearing on the America COMPETES Act (9/25/12)**
- **Hearing on Carbon Capture and Sequestration Legislation (9/25/12)**
- **Hearing on Energy Independence in North America (9/13/12)**

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Monthly Review prepared by Wilson Bonner, Staff of Geoscience Policy, and Kathryn Kynett, 2012 AAPG/AGI Fall Intern Sources: Associated Press, AAAS, Environment and Energy Daily, Greenwire, New York Times, Washington Post, National Academies Press, Government Accountability Office, Open CRS, Thomas, House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, the White House, Department of Energy, Department of the Interior, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, National Science Foundation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Department of Commerce, United Nations, ScienceDebate.org, Integrated Ocean Drilling Program, Virginia Court of Appeals, University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, Columbia University

This monthly review goes out to members of the AGI Geoscience Policy Committee, the leadership of AGI's member societies, and others as part of a continuing effort to improve communications about the role of geoscience in policy. For additional information on specific policy issues, please visit the web site or contact us at govt@agiweb.org or (703) 379-2480.

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