

## Monthly Review: June 2011

*This monthly review goes out to the leadership of AGI's member societies, members of the AGI Government Affairs Advisory Committee, and other interested geoscientists as part of a continuing effort to improve communications between GAP and the geoscience community. The current monthly review and archived monthly reviews are all available online. Subscribe to receive the Government Affairs Monthly Review by email.*

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#### 1. Call for Geoscientists to Attend GEO-CVD in September

The American Geological Institute (AGI), in collaboration with many other geoscience societies, invites geoscientists to come to Washington, DC for the annual Geosciences Congressional Visits Day (GEO-CVD) on **September 20-21, 2011**. Decision makers need to hear from geoscientists. Become a citizen geoscientist and join many of your colleagues for this two-day event uniting geoscience researchers, professionals, students, educators, engineers, and executives in Washington, DC to raise visibility and support for the geosciences.

A constructive visit from citizen geoscientists about the importance and value of geoscience (and geoscience-related engineering) research and education is the most effective way to inform and impact federal science policy.

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#### 2. White House Water Management Draft Plan Released

The Climate Change Adaptation Task Force of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) released a draft water management plan on June 2, 2011. The plan is titled *National Action Plan: Priorities for Managing Freshwater Resources in a Changing Climate*. It outlines the impacts that climate change will have on the nation's freshwater resources and provides recommendations to the U.S. government for addressing the issue. It calls for increased climate and water data and vulnerability assessments as well as more efficient water use. The plan recommends strengthening integrated water resource management planning and educating water resource managers. The public may submit comments until July 17, 2011.

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#### 3. National Ocean Council Releases Preliminary Strategy

The National Ocean Council has released preliminary documents addressing the nine priorities set forth in the National Ocean Policy. These priorities include ecosystem based management; coastal and marine spatial planning; education; resiliency and adaptation to climate change and ocean acidification; regional ecosystem protection and restoration; water quality and sustainability; changing conditions in the Arctic; mapping; and infrastructure. The documents are initial steps in the development of the nine priorities and were drafted with public input. More revisions and updates will be conducted before the final release. The public is once again encouraged to submit comments.

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#### 4. Obama Creates Council to Promote Outdoor Recreation

The Obama administration launched The Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) on June 13, aimed at promoting outdoor recreation. The council consists of representatives from the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture and Commerce, as well as the White House and the Army. FICOR will work to align federal, state, local, and tribal entities in promoting outdoor recreation as a way to improve public health, quality of life, and the U.S. economy. A FICOR web site provides recreation information to the public. The council is part of the administration's "America's Great Outdoors" agenda, outlined earlier this year.

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#### 5. Update on Appropriations for FY 2012

The House Appropriations Committee completed work on the Agriculture and Energy and Water appropriations bills in June. The \$125.5 billion spending bill (H.R. 2112) for Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Food and Drug Administration was approved by the full committee on June 3 and approved by the House on June 16. The measure now goes to the Senate. The bill reduces spending by about 13 percent and it is likely that other appropriations bills will be reduced by similar percentages in House deliberations in July and August. The Agricultural Research Services would receive \$986 million (-\$146 million compared by FY 2011; see SSSA summary for more details).

The \$30.6 billion spending bill (H.R. 2354) for the Department of Energy (DOE), Army Corps of Engineers, and Bureau of Reclamation was approved by the full Appropriations Committee on June 15. DOE would receive \$24.7 billion. Office of Science would receive \$4.8 billion (-\$43 million compared to FY 2011; see AIP-FYI for more details), Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy would receive \$1.3 billion (-\$491 million compared to FY 2011) and Office of Fossil Energy would receive \$477 million (+\$32 million compared to FY 2011, including +\$15 million for Natural Gas Technologies research and development). The committee provides \$25 million to continue the license application process for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository, a project that the Obama administration would like to terminate. The committee provides no funds to restart production of plutonium-238 within DOE for propellant for future NASA space missions, even though the Bush and Obama administrations have requested the funds for the past three years.

The House Appropriations Committee will consider spending for science agencies in July and while the House advances on work on the 12 appropriation bills, Congress and the Obama administration remain at odds regarding the U.S. debt ceiling in relation to

government revenues and spending. Talks between Vice President Biden and members of Congress broke down in June as House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) and Senate Minority Whip John Kyl (R-AZ) left the negotiations because the Republicans do not want to consider taxes in any compromise. President Obama is now talking with Senate and House Leadership about the debt ceiling and future government budgets.

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#### **6. CBO Releases 2011 Long-Term Budget Outlook**

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO), a non-partisan agency tasked with providing analyses on congressional budgetary decisions, has released its 2011 Long-Term Budget Outlook. With an aging population and rising healthcare costs over the next decade, the report calls the difference between federal revenue and federal spending “daunting.” Though the CBO does not provide specific recommendations, the report does say the status quo is unsustainable and increasing revenue, decreasing spending, or a combination of both is the only way to stabilize federal debt.

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#### **7. Representative Hultgren Introduces Critical Minerals Bill**

Yet another bill to address the nation’s supply of critical minerals was introduced in Congress on June 2, 2011. The Energy Critical Elements Advancement Act of 2011 (H.R. 2090), introduced by Representative Randy Hultgren (R-IL), calls for a market-based approach to improving the nation’s critical minerals supply. The act would direct the United States Geological Survey (USGS), in conjunction with the Department of Energy’s Energy Information Administration, to further assess the nation’s supply of energy critical elements and would direct the National Science and Technology Council to compile a report on the viability of recycling energy critical elements. Energy critical elements are defined as rare earths and other elements critical to the development of energy technologies. Representative Brad Miller (D-NC), who sits on the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology with Hultgren, introduced legislation earlier (H.R. 952) on energy critical elements, asking the Department of Energy to conduct research and development on critical elements and substitutes.

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#### **8. Coffman Tries Another Rare Earth Bill**

Representative Mike Coffman (R-CO) has introduced another piece of legislation to address rare earth minerals supply chain concerns. The Rare Earth Policy Task Force and Materials Act (H.R. 2184) would establish a task force within the Department of the Interior (DOI) to review laws, policies, and regulations that inhibit investment and development of domestic rare earths. In addition to the task force, DOI would be required to submit a report to Congress detailing its plan to ensure a long-term supply of rare earth materials for national security and industry. Unlike Coffman’s first attempt, the Rare Earths Supply Chain Technology and Resources Transformation Act of 2011 (H.R. 1388), this bill does not seek to establish programs within DOI.

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#### **9. Senator Wyden Introduces Companion Soda Ash Bill in Senate**

Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) has introduced legislation (S. 1144) in the Senate to extend the reduced royalty rate for soda ash production to ten years. In March, Representative Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) introduced a similar bill (H.R. 1192). The Soda Ash Royalty Reduction Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-338) reduced the royalty rate to two percent for five years and is set to expire in October.

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#### **10. Geothermal Expansion Bills Introduced by Tester and Wyden**

Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) introduced the Geothermal Exploration and Technology Act of 2011 (S.1142). This bill supports mapping and development of U.S. geothermal resources through the establishment of a federal direct loan program focused mainly on high risk exploration wells. The bill would amend the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-140) to expand use of geothermal energy. The Geothermal Production Expansion Act of 2011 (S.1149) was introduced by Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) to expand geothermal production on federal land. Both bills have been referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

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#### **11. Hastings Introduces Two Domestic Energy Production Bills**

After his three offshore oil and gas bills (H.R. 1229, H.R. 1230, H.R. 1231) passed the House in May, Representative Doc Hastings (R-WA) has introduced two more bills in June to jumpstart the development of domestic energy on federal lands. The Cutting Red Tape to Facilitate Renewable Energy Act (H.R. 2170) seeks to limit an agency’s review process by requiring an agency to consider and analyze “only the proposed action” authorizing or facilitating a proposed renewable energy project. Public comments that do not specifically address the proposed action or the no action alternative would not be considered.

The National Petroleum Reserve Alaska Access Act (H.R. 2150) would direct the Secretary of the Interior to hold at least one

lease sale per year from 2011-2021 in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPRA). It imposes permitting timelines that would hold the Department of the Interior accountable for any delays and calls for the U.S. Geological Survey, in cooperation with the state of Alaska and the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, to conduct another resource assessment of technically recoverable fossil fuel resources within NPRA.

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## **12. Coffman Pushes for Onshore Oil and Gas Leases**

Representative Mike Coffman (R-CO) introduced a bill, Facilitating American Security Through Energy Resources Act (FASTER) (H.R. 2375), on June 24, 2011 that would require the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to process 200 lease requests within six months. According to BLM estimates, most drilling permits are processed within 200 days, although some permits can take two years to process. The bill would require BLM to work with industry to determine which leases exhibit the most potential for energy development. The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

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## **13. Bill to Reduce EPA Water Control Passed in House Committee**

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved the Clean Water Cooperative Federalism Act of 2011 (H.R. 2018) sponsored by Representative John Mica (R-FL). The bill takes away the power of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to enforce the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 - 1376) and gives it to individual states. The goal of H.R. 2018 is to allow state control over waterways to reduce delays and promote economic growth. Critics argue water regulations should be managed at the federal level, especially as waterways cut across state boundaries; a downstream state might be negatively impacted if water pollution is not regulated at the federal level.

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## **14. House Panel Approves Coal Ash Bill**

On June 21, 2011, the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment and Economy approved a measure to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from regulating coal ash as a hazardous substance. Many in Congress agree that standards for ash disposal need to be tougher, but coal supporters believe a hazardous designation is unnecessary and will cause economic hardship. Under minimum federal guidelines, the Coal Residuals Reuse and Management Act (H.R. 2273) allows the states to create, implement, and enforce a coal ash disposal program. If a state fails to enforce a coal ash disposal program, the EPA will have the authority to intervene. Ranking Member Henry Waxman (D-CA) believes that the legislation to limit EPA's ability to regulate the disposal of coal ash will add burdens to the agency and increase spending. Waxman stated in a letter to Chairman Fred Upton (R-MI) that the Congressional Budget Office's preliminary review of this legislation will "most likely increase discretionary costs by more than \$500,000 over the next five years." Waxman introduced an amendment to authorize millions of dollars to cover the bill's cost. Republicans voted down the amendment and stated that setting up these coal ash programs at the state level will not result in significant costs.

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## **15. House Bill Would Delay Air Pollution Rules for Boilers**

Representatives Morgan Griffith (R-VA), G.K. Butterfield (D-NC), John Barrow (D-GA), Jim Matheson (D-UT), Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), Pete Olson (R-TX), Mike Ross (D-AR), and Steve Scalise (R-LA) introduced the EPA Regulatory Relief Act of 2011 (H.R. 2250). The measure would give the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) more time to issue standards for industrial boilers. Proponents of the legislation say companies that own boilers could shut down or lay off workers if they are forced to spend more than \$5.8 billion on pollution control rules. The Obama administration previously asked a federal judge for an extra 15 months for the EPA to work out a plan for new air pollution limits on industrial boilers, but the EPA was instructed to move forward. This bill is proposing to dismiss the rules made in February and allow the EPA the extra 15 months to prepare a new plan. Companies would then have at least five years to comply rather than the three years to comply under current law.

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## **16. Gulf Coast Lawmakers Form House Caucus**

Eleven Gulf coast lawmakers have formed a bipartisan congressional caucus designed to focus on legislation and policies relevant to the Gulf. Representatives Steve Scalise (R-LA) and Kathy Castor (D-FL) co-chair the Gulf Coast Caucus that primarily hopes to secure 80 percent of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill payments for the Gulf states. However, there is little agreement among members on how the money should be divided. Senators Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and David Vitter's (R-LA) bill (S.861) recommends sending a majority of the money to Louisiana, which suffered most of the spill's environmental impacts, while Senator Bill Nelson's (D-FL) bill (S.862) would divide the money up based on coastline miles. Neither of these bills has passed out of committee.

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### **17. NASA Deploys Satellite to Map Ocean Salinity**

On Friday, June 10 the United Launch Alliance (ULA) launched the Aquarius/SAC-D satellite on a Delta II rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Aquarius, built by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), is one of nine instruments on the SAC-D ("Satelitte de Aplicaciones Cientificas D") satellite, which is the fourth satellite mission in a series by the Argentine Comisión Nacional de Actividades Espaciales (CONAE). Aquarius will measure ocean salinity and should greatly improve our understanding of the oceans and global climate change. Aquarius can detect a change as small as two hundred parts per million, about one-eighth of a teaspoon of salt in a gallon of water.

The other instruments on SAC-D will collect data on wind speed, precipitation, sea ice conditions, water vapor, surface temperatures, atmospheric conditions, aurorae, fires, and other observations. Many of these measurements will complement the global ocean salinity measurements and add to knowledge of Earth system processes. Brazil, Canada, France and Italy provided some of the instruments and other resources for the mission and will be involved in processing the data with NASA and Argentina. The Delta II launch of SAC-D was the 149th flight of this rocket and only two more launches are planned. Rumors suggest there are components to build five more Delta II rockets and that NASA is talking to the United Launch Alliance about using Delta rockets for future launches. The newer Taurus-XL rocket has failed on two consecutive launches of NASA satellites, causing not only the loss of two major satellites, but also grave concerns about the capabilities of the rocket. NASA and the space community cannot afford any more losses.

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### **18. NASA IG Blames Launch Delays on "Outside Factors"**

The National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS) was conceived to monitor climate systems and to replace several National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) satellites that are nearing the end of their life cycle. NPOESS has been significantly delayed and recently reorganized into the NASA- NOAA Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS) and the Defense Weather Satellite System (DWSS).

The NPOESS Preparatory Project (NPP) was conceived to fill the gap in observations that delays to JPSS has created. The original launch date of NPP was 2006; however, the latest estimate is for a launch date is October 2011. Such delays have already increased project costs by \$304 million for a total estimated cost of \$864 million. Further delays could jeopardize the continuity of climate and weather data and increase the project cost by another \$35 million. The additional \$35 million would be needed to maintain the Delta II rocket system beyond October 2011. NPP is suppose to be the last satellite launch for the Delta II system before it is retired.

NASA's Inspector General (IG) has released a report auditing the management and progress of the project. The IG concludes, "NPP has been adversely impacted by factors outside of NASA's control." Launch delays were due to late delivery of instruments for the satellite by the Integrated Program Office (IPO). The IG therefore concludes that NASA management has been effective. In fact, management of the project on behalf of NASA has been proactive in mitigating the impact of the late delivery. The IG attributed NASA's increased project costs to the "no exchange of funds" in the Final Implementation Agreement and questioned NASA officials for not seeking revision in order for the IPO to incur the extra costs. However, "NASA officials said that including language to make partners liable for the cost of delays would be contrary to the collaborative intent of the agreement and could result in a partner's refusal to participate." Additionally, NASA officials stated that efforts to amend the agreement would have resulted in further delays.

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### **19. OSM Moves Forward in Drafting Stream Protection Rule**



Consistent with plans to produce a rule to protect waterways from mountaintop-removal mining by the end of this year, the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) announced the hiring of a consulting firm, Industrial Economics Inc., to prepare an impact analysis. The rule will be designed to replace the stream buffer zone rule introduced by the Bush administration, which opponents argue is too lenient regarding dumping mining waste near waterways. The effort to rewrite the buffer zone rule has been criticized by House Natural Resource Committee Republicans and the mining industry.

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## **20. USGS Releases Report on Energy Development in the Outer Continental Shelf**

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) released a report in June outlining knowledge gaps in oil and gas development in the outer continental shelf. The report, titled *An Evaluation of the Science Needs to Inform Decisions on Outer Continental Shelf Energy Development in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, Alaska* calls for research on climate change impacts, compilation of geospatial data, evaluation of spill risks, and an enhanced domestic and international dialogue. The report was compiled in response to a March 2010 request of Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, who cited the unique environmental conditions in the region as necessitating improved understanding.

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## **21. Delay in New EPA Fossil Fuel Standards**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it will delay the release of its New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) until September 30, 2011. The NSPS were originally scheduled for release on July 26, 2011. These new regulations are intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants, which account for 40 percent of total emissions. The NSPS will expand upon the rules set out by the Obama administration in January of 2011. The regulations implemented by the administration focus on construction standards for new plants and those undergoing renovation. The NSPS will regulate existing plants, which currently are not regulated under federal standards.

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## **22. Federal Agencies to Work Together on Emission Standards for Drilling**

On June 24, the Obama administration announced a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of the Interior, and the Department of Agriculture. The goal of the MOU is to streamline the emissions review process for drilling projects in hopes of reducing delays and setting expectations and agreements for how to address air quality. The new MOU primarily affects western states, which have seen a recent boom in natural gas drilling and drilling proposals.

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## **23. Urban Waters Federal Partnership to Revitalize Urban Waterways**

On June 24, the White House announced a new Urban Waters Federal Partnership led by the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of the Interior, and Department of Agriculture and coordinated by the White House Domestic Policy Council. The partnership of eleven federal agencies will work with local communities to protect and preserve water quality and the surrounding habitat, increase public access to water, and educate communities on water quality. The initial efforts are being focused on seven locations where restoration projects have already been started by local governments. These locations are the Patapsco Watershed (Maryland), the Anacostia Watershed (Washington DC/Maryland), the Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds (New York), the South Platte River in Denver (Colorado), the Los Angeles River Watershed (California), the Lake Pontchartrain Area (New Orleans, LA), and the Northwest Indiana Area.

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## **24. EPA Comment Period for Defining U.S. Waterways Extended**

In response to requests from state and local officials, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have extended the public comment period for the draft guidance of *Identifying Waters Protected by the Clean Water Act* until July 31, 2011. The guidance will define what waterways and wetlands are protected by the Clean Water Act and improve the clarity and predictability of guidelines. The current draft reaffirms the protection of critical waters such as small streams that feed into larger bodies of water and it outlines permit requirements for pollution discharge.

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## **25. NSF's Integrated Ocean Drilling Program Releases Science Plan for 2013-2023**

The National Science Foundation's (NSF) Integrated Ocean Drilling Program released its Science Plan for 2013-2023 for the International Ocean Discovery Program. This plan is to direct multidisciplinary and international cooperation in scientific ocean drilling. This program is designed to focus on climate and ocean change, seafloor biosphere exploration, lithosphere and deep Earth processes, and earthquake, tsunami, and landslide processes.

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## **26. NOAA's State of the Climate 2010 Report Released**

On June 27, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released State of the Climate in 2010, an annual report that concludes that 2010 was one of the two warmest years on record. The peer-reviewed report was prepared in coordination with the American Meteorological Society and tracks the temperature of the upper and lower atmosphere, humidity, sea ice, precipitation, and 36 other climate indicators. While important climate oscillations such as El Nino and the Arctic Oscillation contributed to many of the world's significant 2010 weather events, a comprehensive analysis of climate indicator data sets shows a continuation of the long-term warming trend scientists have seen for the past 50 years.

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## **27. NOAA Releases Draft on Scientific Integrity**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released their science integrity policy draft, to comply with President Obama's 2009 executive order that requires agencies to ensure scientific integrity. NOAA's policy covers hiring practices and scientific misconduct and encourages scientists to publish their findings and discuss their research with media. The Union of Concerned Scientists praised NOAA's draft for raising the bar on scientific integrity policies and for the policy's coverage of employees and contractors involved in scientific activities. To date, NOAA and the Department of the Interior are the only two agencies to have posted their full policies online.

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## **28. Cora Marrett Appointed Deputy Director of National Science Foundation**

Cora Marrett was sworn in as the twelfth Deputy Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF) on June 22, 2011. She was nominated for the position by President Obama and confirmed by the United States Senate. Marrett has two decades of federal and university leadership experience, having held various positions within NSF and academia. She holds a doctorate in sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

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## **29. Supreme Court Rules in Favor of Power Companies**

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously in *American Electric Power Co., Inc., et al. vs. Connecticut et al.* that six states (California, Connecticut, Iowa, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont) cannot try to limit emissions of greenhouse gases under federal common law of public nuisance. The states argued that the power companies, American Electric Power Co., Xcel Energy Inc., Duke Energy Corp., Southern Co. and the Tennessee Valley Authority, were releasing greenhouse gases, contributing to global warming and damaging the environment and economy in their states.

The states filed their suit in 2004 before the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began to prepare regulations regarding emissions. The high court ruled that the EPA could place restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions if EPA determined that the emissions were a public health issue. The Supreme Court decided this in *Massachusetts vs. EPA* in 2007. The EPA issued a public health endangerment finding subsequently and has begun preparing rules.

The court's opinion, written by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, says the EPA should regulate any emissions that impact states through the Clean Air Act and therefore that states cannot claim any damages under the federal public nuisance law. The ruling allows states to sue under state public nuisance laws, but it is unclear what steps the six states will take next. Some states, such as Mississippi, are suing power companies about emissions under state public nuisance laws and other states may wait to see how these suits proceed.

The opinion makes it clear that the Supreme Court wants EPA to regulate emissions through the Clean Air Act rather than having courts involved through the federal public nuisance law. EPA has been slow to establish regulations and states will need to decide whether they can wait for EPA or whether they should proceed with suits through state public nuisance laws to try to reduce problems and recoup any damages.

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## **30. Hydraulic Fracturing Gets Banned, Halted in the East**

Amid concerns about the potential environmental risks of hydraulic fracturing, a state and a municipality have banned the controversial drilling method. Governor Martin O'Malley (D) of Maryland called for a halt on hydraulic fracturing in the state until a comprehensive study of economic, environmental, and safety impacts is completed. This would lead to a three-year ban on the process, a move strongly criticized by industry and state legislators from the counties in which the drilling would take place. Taking O'Malley's halt a step further, the city council in Morgantown, WV banned hydraulic fracturing within one mile of the city limits on June 22. The council explained that the move was in response to the state's failure to pass effective regulations and that they hoped their ban would catalyze state action. Around 150 representatives of the natural gas industry protested outside the city

courthouse.

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### **31. Raised Concerns For Global Ocean Health**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Programme on the State of the Ocean (IPSO) published a workshop report to the United Nations member states on June 21, 2011. The report concluded that the world's oceans are in a much graver state than previously believed. Specifically, the authors write that oceans are at a high risk for more marine species extinctions than seen in human history. The IUCN and IPSO hope the report will encourage increased protection of the oceans on behalf of the United Nations as well as local and regional states. A full Global State of the Ocean Report is intended for release in 2012.

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### **32. Former Representative Inglis Creates Global Warming Conservative Coalition**

Former six-term Representative Bob Inglis (R-SC) plans to start a conservative Republican coalition whose members believe that human emissions are causing global warming and that the situation needs to be addressed. This coalition is calling "conservatives to return to conservatism and to turn away from the populist rejection of science." Given the political stance today, Inglis notes that this idea may take at least two election cycles to become popular. While many House Republicans do not see the need to reduce carbon emissions, some current members of Congress are interested in participating in such a coalition. Inglis hopes Republicans will realize the need to take immediate action on climate change as details of this coalition are being finalized.

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### **33. Yale Report on Climate Change Communication Released**

The Yale Project on Climate Change Communication released a report titled *Climate Change in the American Mind* on June 6, 2011, presenting results of a national survey of American's global warming attitudes. The report includes statistics on global warming beliefs, perceptions of risk and personal importance, and how personal opinions have changed over the past three years. Researchers found that about half of Americans believe that global warming is already causing problems in the United States and that the average American trusts scientists and federal agencies.

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### **34. ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Release Position Statement on Climate Change**

The members of American Society of Agronomy (ASA), Crop Science Society of America (CSSA), and Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) have developed a position statement on climate change based on current scientific knowledge. Reflecting a consensus of national and international climate scientists, the statement says that climate change is occurring and is threatening the sustainability of agricultural systems. These threats present themselves in the increase of temperatures linked to rising anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. The changes in temperature have already affected crops and the effects are predicted to become more severe. This poses a challenge for the agriculture community because the agriculture sector must increase production to provide food for an expanding population (estimated to be nine billion people by the mid-twenty first century). While doing so, they also have to protect the environment and enhance crop systems to survive change. In order for the agricultural community to respond to climate change, the statement says research and development teams must acquire the knowledge and methods to ensure food security and services.

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### **35. AGI Welcomes New AIPG/AGI Summer Interns**

Joining Lauren Herwehe as AGI's newest summer interns are Erica Dalman and Victoria Bierwirth. Erica Dalman is a rising senior at Grand Valley State University (GVSU), where she will graduate with a B.S. in Geology and a minor in International Business. She is a member of the Fredrick Meijer Honor's College and an active student life participant as president of Sabrosísimo (GVSU's Latin dance group). Erica comes to us from the state of Michigan by way of Venezuela; she is fluent in Spanish and English. In the summer of 2010, she was selected to participate in an ExxonMobil/GSA undergraduate field course. Erica has presented a joint geoscience education research poster at the Geological Society of America Annual Meeting. She recently completed field camp in the Republic of South Africa and hopes her career as a geologist will continue to open opportunities for travel. This summer, Erica hopes to focus on natural hazards, ocean policy and advocating for science education. Vicki Bierwirth will be graduating with her Bachelor of Science degree in Geological Engineering and minor in Geospatial Technology in May 2014 from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (SDSM&T). Vicki is a member of the Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society and has been recognized on the SDSM&T's Dean's List for five semesters. She recently completed an internship with NASA-Goddard Space Flight Center working closely with Dr. Charles Gatebe under the Undergraduate Student Research Program. Her focus was on the Cloud Absorption Radiometer (CAR) visualizing and interpreting airborne and satellite imagery and creating composite high resolution Landsat images of the CAR flight paths. She is looking forward to the experiences



that AGI has to offer and the information to gain from the democratic processes between the geosciences and public policy.

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## **36. Key Reports and Publications**

### **\*\*\*Government Accountability Office\*\*\***

#### **Flood Insurance: Public Policy Goals Provide a Framework for Reform**

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) has been on the Government Accountability Office high risk list since 2006 and has an outstanding debt of \$17.8 billion. Its need to borrow in years of heavy flooding has raised concerns about its long term financial stability. This report provides recommendations of how to place NFIP on sounder footing and what changes can be made at the Federal Emergency Management Agency to ensure proper and efficient management.

#### **FEMA: Action Needed to Improve Administration of the National Flood Insurance Program**

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) has been the focus of many reports because of its current outstanding debt. This report examines the extent to which the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) management practices affect the administration of NFIP, lessons learned from the cancellation of FEMA's attempt to modernize NFIP's insurance management system, and limitations on FEMA's authority that could affect NFIP's financial stability. The recommendations within the report are extensive and were all agreed to by the Department of Homeland Security.

#### **Climate Change: Improvements Needed to Clarify National Priorities and Better Align Them with Federal Funding Decisions**

Prepared at the request of Representative Ed Markey (D-MA), the Government Accountability Office (GAO) prepared this report to highlight the need to clarify national priorities on funding for climate change research and mitigation. GAO found two key factors that complicate efforts to align funding with priorities. For one, federal officials' responses to a GAO questionnaire show that there is not a shared understanding of priorities related to climate change. In addition, mechanisms for aligning funding with priorities are non-binding and money is limited when in conflict with an agency's own priorities. The report recommends developing clear strategic national climate change priorities and assessing the current methods of reporting related funding.

#### **Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Oversight of Underground Piping Systems Commensurate with Risk, but Proactive Measures Could Help Address Future Leaks**

All nuclear sites in the United States have groundwater contamination from radioactive leaks including some from leaky underground piping systems. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is responsible for the regulation of nuclear plants to protect the environment and public health. This report assesses the impacts of radioactive leaks associated with underground piping systems on public health, reviews NRC's requirements for inspecting and monitoring leaks, asks what actions have been taken by private industry and NRC in response to leaks, and recommends requirements to help prevent leaks. Experts found that though onsite contamination could lead to high decommission costs due to remediation requirements, radioactive leaks associated with underground piping systems cause no discernible impacts on public health. However, NRC's inspection methods for underground pipes were found to be inadequate. Current practices only focus on the functionality of pipes rather than the groundwater offsite that would most likely affect public health. NRC has taken steps to improve their oversight.

#### **Nuclear Material: DOE's Depleted Uranium Tails Could Be a Source of Revenue for the Government**

Since the 1940's the Department of Energy (DOE) has processed natural uranium into enriched uranium for nuclear weapons and energy which has resulted in over 700,000 tons of leftover depleted uranium or "tails." To date, DOE has not sold or enriched any of its depleted uranium. This report focuses on DOE's options for these tails, their potential value, and the factors that affect the value. DOE's options include selling the tails "as is," re-enriching them, or storing them indefinitely though the legal authority to sell them "as is" is "doubtful." Their value based on uranium prices in May 2011 is \$4.2 billion but the report stresses that this value is highly variable. Though DOE completed a comprehensive uranium management plan in 2008, this report recommends DOE update or write a new plan reflecting the current market.

#### **Oil and Gas: Interior's Restructuring Challenges in the Aftermath of the Gulf Oil Spill**

Delivered to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, this testimony investigates the challenges the Department of the Interior (DOI) has faced since reorganizing its oil and gas oversight responsibilities in the aftermath of the BP oil spill. The testimony finds challenges in reorganization, balancing responsibilities, human capital, revenue collection, and development of existing leases. Many recommendations are included in the testimony to make DOI's oversight of oil and gas production both onshore and offshore more efficient and effective.

#### **Nuclear Waste: Disposal Challenges and Lessons Learned from Yucca Mountain**

In 1982, Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act to require the Department of Energy (DOE) to investigate geological storage of the nation's spent nuclear fuel and high-level nuclear waste. That act was amended in 1987 to require DOE to focus

their investigations at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Though DOE submitted a license application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in 2008 to open the repository, they withdrew it in 2010. This report looks at what implications the terminating of the Yucca Mountain repository could have on commercial and DOE-managed waste and what options exist for interim storage.

### **Managing Critical Isotopes: Weaknesses in DOE's Management of Helium-3 Delayed the Federal Response to a Critical Supply Shortage**

In 2008, the federal government realized it faced a severe shortage of the isotope helium-3 which is a key component of equipment used in ports and borders to detect radiation and prevent the smuggling of nuclear material into the United States. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), within the Department of Energy (DOE), is responsible for the extraction of helium-3 and controls its inventory. After the events of September 11, 2001, demand increased for radiation detection equipment and DOE's Isotope Development and Production for Research and Applications Program sold large amounts of NNSA's helium-3 without consulting them about supply. This breakdown of communication ultimately led to a shortage. This report asks to what extent the federal response to the shortage was affected by DOE's management of helium-3, what the priorities are for allocating the rest of the limited supply, and what steps are being taken to increase the supply of helium-3 or develop alternatives.

\*\*\*National Academy of Sciences\*\*\*

### **Assessing the Relationship Between Propagule Pressure and Invasion Risk in Ballast Water**

The National Research Council published a report regarding the concentration of living organisms in ballast water. Ballast water, used on ships to stabilize the craft, carries living organisms that are invasive to the environments in which they are dumped. The Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Coast Guard are developing plans to regulate the concentration of living organisms in ballast water. The report found that further research and collection of data is necessary to better understand what concentrations are less threatening. Additionally, it cautioned that the concentration of organisms in ballast water is only one factor out of many that can bring invasive species to U.S. waterways.

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### **37. Key Federal Register Notices**

**DOI** – The Department of the Interior (DOI) has released its draft WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow) Strategic Implementation Plan and is accepting public comments. Further information can be found in the notice. [Thursday, June 2, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 106)]

**NASA** – The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is seeking comments on the agency's preliminary plan to conduct an analysis of its existing regulations based upon President Obama's promise to eliminate unnecessary or duplicative regulations. Further details can be found in the notice. [Thursday, June 2, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 106)]

**EPA** – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Science Advisory Board will hold a public teleconference to review the EPA's Draft Integrated Science Assessment for Ozone and Related Photochemical Oxidants. It will be held on July 6 and will be conducted by telephone only. [Friday, June 3, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 107) ]

**DOE** – There will be an open meeting for the Department of Energy's (DOE) Natural Gas Subcommittee on July 13 in Washington, DC. Further information can be found in the notice. [Friday, June 10, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 112)]

**NOAA/NMFS** – The National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) will conduct a review to see whether seismic surveys used by the oil and gas industry for geological and geophysical exploration on the Outer Continental Shelf in the Gulf of Mexico comply with the Marine Mammal Protection Act. [Tuesday, June 14, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 114)]

**OSTP** – The Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) announces the meeting of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) regarding the U.S. patent system, activities of the Chief Information Officer, and the future of the U.S. science and technology research on July 15. Further details can be found in the notice. [Wednesday, June 15, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 115)]

**EPA** – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Science Advisory Board (SAB) will hold a public teleconference to review a SAB draft report, Review of EPA's Draft Hydraulic Fracturing Study Plan. It will be held on July 5th by telephone only. [Thursday, June 16, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 116)]

**NOAA** – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) scientific integrity policy draft is available for public review and comment until August 20, 2011. Document can be found in the notice. [Tuesday, June 21, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 119)]

**EPA** – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to amend best available monitoring methods in regulations for Petroleum and Natural Gas Systems of the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Rule. [Monday, June 27, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 123)]

**EPA** – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing a public hearing for the proposed rule “Regulation of Fuels and Fuel Additives: 2012 Renewable Fuel Standards.” The hearing will be held in Washington, DC on July 12, 2011. [Tuesday, June 28, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 124)]

**BLM** – Effective July 21, 2011, the Public Land Order withdraws 1,010,776 acres of public and National Forest System lands around the Grand Canyon from location and entry under the 1872 Mining Law. This withdrawal is allowed under the Secretary of the Interior’s emergency withdrawal authority in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. [(Tuesday, June 28, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 124)]

**EPA** – The National Drinking Water Advisory Council will hold an open meeting on July 21-22 in San Francisco, CA. [Wednesday, June 29, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 125)]

**BOEMRE** – The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) is inviting public comments on an information collection request concerning the paperwork requirements in regulations for geological and geophysical explorations of the Outer Continental Shelf. BOEMRE is particularly interested in updating paperwork requirements to reflect advances in technology and clarifying requirements for environmental compliance. Comments are due by August 29, 2011. [Thursday, June 30, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 126)]

**EPA** – The Environmental Protection Agency is seeking public input on proposed changes to information collection requirements concerning certain provisions of the Clean Water Act. Comments must be submitted by August 29, 2011 and further information can be found in the notice. [Thursday, June 30, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 126)]

**USGS** – This notice announces an open meeting of the Advisory Committee on Water Information to be held at the U.S. Geological Survey Headquarters in Reston, VA on July 12 and 13. [Thursday, June 30, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 126)]

**NOAA** – There will be an open workshop hosted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, NC to discuss monitoring changes in extreme storm statistics. The workshop will occur on July 25-27. [Thursday, June 30, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 126)]

**NSF, USGS** – The National Science Foundation (NSF) announces the completion of a final programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) for marine seismic research funded by NSF and conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey. The PEIS can be accessed through the notice. [Thursday, June 30, 2011 (Volume 76, Number 126)]

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### **38. Key AGI Government Affairs Updates**

- [Hearings on Mining, Mapping, Soils and Other Surface/Subsurface Issues \(6/29/11\)](#)
- [Hearings on Energy Policy \(6/28/11\)](#)
- [Hearings on Environmental Policy \(6/27/11\)](#)
- [Hearings on Natural Hazards Policy \(6/27/11\)](#)
- [Hearings on Water and Oceans Policy \(6/27/11\)](#)
- [Hearings on Education, Research and Development, and Workforce Policy \(6/27/11\)](#)

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This monthly review goes out to members of the AGI Government Affairs Program (GAP) Advisory Committee, the leadership of AGI’s member societies, and other interested geoscientists as part of a continuing effort to improve communications between GAP and the geosciences community that it serves. For additional information on specific policy issues, please visit the web site or contact us at [govt@agiweb.org](mailto:govt@agiweb.org).

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