

Monthly Review: January 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. Subscribe to receive the Geopolity Monthly Review by email.

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1. Apply for AGI's 2012 AIPG/AGI Summer Internships - Deadline March 15

The American Geosciences Institute's Geoscience Policy offers summer and semester 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 March 15 for summer, April 15 for fall and October 15, 2012 for spring 2013.

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. Congressional Visits Day in April and September - Join Us in DC

Geoscientists are invited to join organized groups of scientists and engineers for workshops and visits with congressional members and committees (SET-CVD April 24-25 and GEO-CVD September 11-12, 2012). Decision makers need to hear from geoscientists. Become a citizen geoscientist and join many of your colleagues for a workshop followed by a day conducting visits with members of Congress or congressional staff on Capitol Hill to speak about the importance of geoscience research, development, and education..

April 24-25, 2012

Science-Engineering-Technology Congressional Visits Day (SET-CVD) is a larger event for all the sciences.

September 11-12, 2012

Geosciences Congressional Visits Day (GEO-CVD), an event specifically geared towards geoscientists.

Please send an email to govt@agiweb.org for more information or to sign-up.

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3. Obama Suggests NOAA Move to Interior; Pulls Chief Scientist Nomination

President Obama suggested that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) be moved into the Department of the Interior (DOI) as part of his plan to make the federal government leaner and more effective. The reorganization plan was announced on January 13. Separately, on the eve of the President's State of the Union address, Obama announced that he was withdrawing Scott Doney as his nominee for Chief Scientist at NOAA, given the long hold on the nomination by Senator David Vitter (R-LA).

President Obama's reorganization plan would consolidate six agencies into one new cabinet-level department focused on business. The agencies include U.S. Department of Commerce's core business and trade functions, the Small Business Administration, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Export-Import Bank, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency. Department of Commerce (DOC) would be eliminated and NOAA would be moved to the DOI. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) would be placed in the new department. Obama has asked Congress to fast-track his reorganization plan, but early responses from members of Congress do not seem to favor rapid action or the plan. In a separate action that is not related to the reorganization plan President Obama withdrew his nomination of Scott Doney for Chief Scientist at NOAA on January 24, 2012. The nomination has been on hold for more than a year. Senator Vitter initiated the hold on December 9, 2010 in a letter to the President. Vitter was uncomfortable confirming a science advisor while there are "significant outstanding concerns over scientific integrity at federal agencies and the White House, including with regard to the recent drilling moratorium and the ongoing bottleneck in permitting, which I would characterize as a continuing de facto moratorium" according to a statement in his letter.

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4. White House Releases Draft of National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan

The National Ocean Council released a draft of President Obama's National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan in January of 2012 for public comment. The plan lists over 50 actions the federal government must take to address the challenges facing oceans, coasts, and the Great Lakes. Such safeguards will protect natural resources, tens of millions of jobs, public health, national security, and a trillion dollar contribution to the economy each year. Comments on the draft plan are requested by February 27,

2012.

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5. OMB Director Lew Becomes President Obama's Chief of Staff

With former Chief of Staff William Daley's resignation on January 9, President Obama has appointed Jacob Lew, director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), to serve as Obama's third chief of staff. Lew will start on February 1, 2012.

Jacob "Jack" Lew previously served as OMB director under President Bill Clinton and was former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill's (D-MA) senior policy advisor. Daley will move back to Chicago and begin working as co-chair of Obama's reelection campaign. Jeff Zients, who temporarily led OMB in 2010 after the departure of Peter Orszag, will serve as acting director.

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6. Outlook for Legislation in the Second Session of 112th Congress

The 112th Congress began their second session in January 2012 with continuing acrimony between the Democrats and the Republicans, leaving the outlook for progress on legislation muddled. The acrimony is exacerbated by election year politics, a polarized public, and a lack of any congressional consensus on many issues. Among geosciences-related measures introduced in the first session, there may be action on critical materials, energy resources and hazards. Work on fiscal year 2013 appropriation bills may begin in House subcommittees, but then is likely to stall as Election Day approaches, leading to a flurry of appropriations activity in November and December of 2012.

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) introduced the Critical Minerals Policy Act of 2011 (S. 1113) to facilitate the reestablishment of a critical minerals industry, workforce, and research and development capabilities in the United States. The critical minerals include the rare earth elements, yttrium, scandium, cobalt, helium, phosphate, potash, lead, and thorium. The bill has bipartisan support from 16 senate co-sponsors; however, it has not been embraced by the Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman, Jeff Bingaman (D-NM). He is concerned with some of the bill's mining provisions that expedite permitting for extraction and exploration. The committee held a hearing on S.1113 and some other critical materials measures and work will likely continue to pass some version of some of these measures.

Over in the House, Doug Lamborn (R-CO), chairman of the Subcommittee on Energy and Minerals in the Committee on Natural Resources has introduced The National Strategic and Critical Minerals Policy Act of 2011 (H.R. 2011) to assess the nation's capability to meet current and future demands for critical minerals. The bill directs the Secretary of the Interior to prepare a report assessing the non-fossil-fuel mineral potential of land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management and the National Forest Service. Another provision would require the Secretary to assess the number of federal employees with educational degrees or experience in geology, geochemistry, mining, industrial minerals, metallurgy, metallurgical engineering, and mining engineering. The bill has passed through the full committee and is waiting for a vote on the House floor.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has passed several measures on energy resources that may see progress in the second session of the 112th Congress. The Geothermal Exploration and Technology Act of 2011 (S. 1142) sponsored by Senator Jon Tester (D-MT), would direct the DOE to create a direct loan program for geothermal wells in high risk or unexplored areas through the establishment of a Geothermal Investment Fund. The legislation further promotes the development of geothermal energy by directing DOE to conduct research and development (R&D) on geothermal heat pumps and to provide loans to install geothermal heat pumps designed to service large populations. The Geothermal Production Expansion Act of 2011 (S. 1149), Senator Ron Wyden's (D-OR) bill, would increase the availability of federal geothermal resources by amending the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 23) to allow adjacent lands of a previously granted lease to be made available for a noncompetitive lease at fair market value.

The Oil and Gas Facilitation Act of 2011 (S. 916) would ease restrictions on domestic oil and gas development, provide funds to improve onshore oil and gas permit processing, facilitate the coproduction of oil and gas and geothermal energy, charter a comprehensive inventory of natural resources in the outer continental shelf, create an outer continental shelf lease and permitting office in Alaska and promote the development of an Alaska natural gas pipeline. To reduce oil consumption and increase domestic clean energy development and deployment, the committee passed the Advanced Vehicle Technology Act of 2011 (S. 734), the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act of 2011 (S. 1000), the Alternative Fuel Vehicles Competitiveness and Energy Security Act of 2011 (S. 1001), and a bill to promote the domestic development and deployment of clean energy technologies. This last bill would create a Clean Energy Deployment Administration (CEDA) which was first discussed as part of the 21st Century Energy Technology Deployment Act (S. 949) which was introduced in 2009.

The Nuclear Power 2021 Act (S. 512) would require the Department of Energy (DOE) to demonstrate two small modular reactor designs and the Nuclear Energy Research Initiative Improvement Act of 2011 (S. 1067) would require the DOE to support research to reduce the manufacturing and construction costs associated with nuclear reactors.

On December 1, the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology passed the National Hazard Risk Reduction Act of 2011

(H.R. 3479). The bill reauthorizes the National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program (NEHRP) through fiscal year (FY) 2014. NEHRP is a long-standing cooperative program involving the National Science Foundation (NSF), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to understand, monitor and analyze earthquakes and mitigate earthquake risks.

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation passed a Senate version of the measure, the Natural Hazards Risk Reduction Act [S. 646; introduced by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA)], on May 5, 2011. The next step for the two different measures is a possible vote by the full Senate and the full House. If both measures are approved then the chambers will need conference to work out the differences between the bills. The Senate bill provides higher authorizations that match with the needs of the programs and previous authorizations, while the House bill reduces authorization levels.

Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) introduced the National Volcano Early Warning and Monitoring Program Act (S.566) that would establish a national volcano watch office and data center, support improved monitoring of volcanic hazards and establish a competitive grant program for volcanic research. A hearing about the legislation has been held in the Public Lands and Forests subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) introduced the National Hurricane Research Initiative Act (S.692) to direct NOAA and NSF to conduct hurricane research and enhance training of the next generation of hurricane researchers and forecasters to improve U.S. resiliency to hurricane hazards. The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation has passed the bill and the House has a companion bill (H.R. 2258) in the House Science, Space and Technology Committee.

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7. Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future Releases Final Report

On January 26, the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future (BRC) presented their final report consisting of recommendations to create a safe, long-term solution to managing and disposing the nation's nuclear waste. *The Report to the Secretary of Energy* was commissioned two years ago by President Obama to identify strategies to manage more than 65,000 tons of spent nuclear fuel stored at about 75 operating and shutdown reactor sites around the country.

One of the BRC's main proposals is to hand over the responsibility of managing nuclear waste from the Department of Energy to a federally chartered corporation founded for that purpose. Though the commission was not instructed to evaluate the suitability of any particular waste site, the report recommended an immediate search for a geologic repository for the long-term storage of waste and an interim site until the long-term site is developed. Referring to the tens of billions of dollars paid to the government by utility companies since 1998, the report recommended restructuring the Nuclear Waste Trust Fund so that the money will only be spent for its intended purpose. As it stands, the money that utilities pay to the fund every year goes into general government funds. The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, the Nuclear Energy Institute, the Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition, the American Public Power Association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, and the Edison Electrical Institute endorsed the commission's report. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu called the report "a critical step toward finding a sustainable approach to disposing used nuclear fuel and nuclear waste" and announced that DOE will develop a strategy for managing used nuclear fuel and other nuclear waste within six months of the completion of the commission's report. Senator Harry Reid (D-NV), a critic of the proposed Yucca Mountain waste site, said "The Yucca Mountain project failed and is now a relic of the past. The Blue Ribbon Commission's final report is a critical step towards safely and securely managing nuclear waste." Several congressional committees have scheduled hearings to discuss the recommendations.

The House Committee on Energy and Commerce held a hearing on February 1; the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on February 2; and the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology will hold a hearing on February 8 about the BRC final report.

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8. Secretary Salazar Extends Ban On Uranium Mining in Grand Canyon

On January 16, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar issued a Public Land Order to withdraw one million acres of federal land near the Grand Canyon from new mining claims and sites under the 1872 Mining Law (30 U.S.C. 22 et seq.). A temporary mining ban had previously been in place since 2009.

The land withdrawal will ban new uranium and other hard rock mines from emerging on the lands in and around the Kaibab National Forest for the next 20 years but will not remove any existing uranium mines in the banned areas. The power of the Public Land Order was given to the Secretary of the Interior in the 1970s to modify, extend or revoke land withdrawals.

Environmentalists support Salazar's order and believe the move will improve the quality of the drinking water supply in the area. Some Republicans, including Arizona Governor Jan Brewer, do not support the ban because they believe it will hurt job growth in the area. Salazar countered such arguments, mentioning that existing mines have the opportunity to develop further, which could increase job opportunities.

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9. Salazar Establishes DOI Strategic Science Group

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has established a Strategic Science Group to create a more efficient assessment of natural resources affected by environmental crises. The group will be co-chaired by Gary Machlis, Science Advisor to the National Park Service (NPS) and David Applegate, Associate Director for Natural Hazards at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

On January 3, 2012, Salazar signed a Secretarial Order establishing the Department of the Interior (DOI) Strategic Science Group. The co-leaders have experience in environmental crisis planning. Machlis was part of a trial version of the Department of the Interior Strategic Sciences Working Group, formed by Salazar in the aftermath of the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in 2010. Applegate has experience as coordinator of the USGS hazards planning and response activities. Salazar's wants the Strategic Science Group to provide DOI with a more streamlined method of decision making during environmental crises, as it pertains to the nation's natural resources. This will entail preparation for future scenarios by researching the handling of past crises and maintaining a current assessment of potential crises. The order calls for the prompt assembly of a team of scientists to assess an environmental catastrophe as the crisis is occurring and give DOI guidance to support decision making.

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10. DOI Requests Comments on Climate Adaptation Strategy

The Department of the Interior (DOI) is requesting comments on a first draft of its National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy. The strategy will help resource managers reduce the impact of climate change on ecosystems and wildlife. The report was requested in the fiscal year 2010 Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (P.L. 111-88).

The strategy attempts to describe the expected impacts of climate change and ocean acidification on the wide range of America's habitats. By identifying seven broad goals to mitigate the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification on ecosystems, the report describes unique strategies for several habitats.

Comments from the public are due by March 5, 2012 and interested individuals may register for webinars and workshops about the strategy throughout February.

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11. EPA Launches New Tool to Report Water Pollution Data

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced the availability of an online resource that provides local water pollution data to the public. The Discharge Monitoring Report Pollutant Loading Tool is designed to help the public determine who, what, how much and where pollution is being discharged.

Data is provided by EPA's Discharge Monitoring Report, Permit Compliance System, Toxics Release Inventory, and the Integrated Compliance Information System for the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and is available for years 2007-2010. EPA had initially released a beta version of the loading tool in 2007 and public input helped to improve and develop the newly available version.

EPA's Enforcement and Compliance Online (ECHO) program has data on inspection, compliance, and violations of the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, and hazardous waste laws. Recent updates have provided users with access to National Emissions Inventory data and water quality data.

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12. EPA Releases 2010 TRI National Analysis and GHG Emissions Data

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released their 2010 National Analysis of Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) and 2010 Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program Data. The TRI National Analysis is a report that interprets the content of the TRI. The TRI is a continually updated database tracking the release and disposal of over 650 chemicals from over 20,000 facilities. Comprehensive greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions data reported from large facilities and suppliers are available to the public for the first time from an EPA online tool.

The EPA notes that the TRI covers the majority of toxic releases but not all toxic releases nationally. The database is designed to inform the public on where the toxic chemicals are released and how the plants manage their disposal. The intent of the analysis is to present the trends in disposal and management of waste on a national scale and how it relates to previous years. The report provides profiles on the chemical disposal of the following individual industries: chemical manufacturing, electrical utilities, metal mining, cement manufacturing, and paper products.

On January 11, 2012, EPA released greenhouse gas (GHG) data reported from large facilities and suppliers across the U.S. economy for the year 2010. The 2010 GHG data includes public information from facilities in 9 industry groups, including 29 source categories, which directly emit large quantities of GHGs, as well as suppliers of certain fossil fuels and industrial gases.

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13. National Forest Service Finalizing System Management Land Planning Rule

The National Forest Service released its final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and “preferred alternative” for the National Forest System Management Land Planning Rule in January. The planning rule is meant to guide development, revision, and amendment of land management plans for units of the National Forest System. After initially soliciting comments on a proposed rule and draft environmental impact statement, the Forest Service decided to release several versions of the proposed rule, including a “preferred alternative,” along with its PEIS. In February, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack will decide which final rule he will select.

The “preferred alternative” is a modified version of the proposed rule based on comments from and consultation with the public, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Its implementation requires an understanding of a landscape-scale context for unit-level management to account for issues, such as fire, water and wildlife, which are not limited to forests’ borders. This information will inform an assessment which is intended to guide the development of a plan. Each plan will include ecosystem restoration, watershed protection, diversity of plant and animal communities, climate change, multiple uses, efficiency and effectiveness, transparency and collaboration, and coordination and cooperation beyond National Forest System boundaries as components. The “preferred alternative” creates a strategy for monitoring to ensure accountability and consistency in planning across the system.

The U.S. Forest Service is requesting nominations for individuals interested in serving on a new advisory committee that will advise and provide recommendations to Vilsack on the implementation of the planning rule once it has been finalized. The National Advisory Committee for Implementation of the National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule will consist of 21 members who represent various public interests including a representative for the energy and mineral development industry, science community, environmental organizations, and archeological interests. The deadline for nominations is on February 21, 2012.

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14. NSB Releases Science and Engineering Indicators Report

On January 17, the National Science Board (NSB) of the National Science Foundation (NSF) released their biennial Science and Engineering Indicators (SEI) report. The 2012 SEI report is designed to give the President and Congress an update on the status of science and engineering in America by presenting data and trends on research and development (R&D), education, and the science and engineering workforce.

The report found that U.S. share of global R&D dropped from 38 percent to 31 percent, whereas it grew from 24 percent to 35 percent in the Asia region during the same time. While private industry funding of U.S. R&D fell off in 2009, support from federal programs kept overall funding at nearly the same levels as 2008. Since 2001, federal funding of R&D has doubled (not accounting for inflation) with life sciences funding increasing by more than one third (after inflation), physical sciences funding remaining steady, and environmental sciences funding decreasing by more than 10 percent.

In addition to R&D trends, the report presented data on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and science and engineering workforce trends. Over two decades the total number of awarded college degrees has increased by 50 percent, but degrees in physical science and engineering have not kept up with that pace. The U.S. science and engineering (S&E) higher education workforce is becoming increasingly more foreign. New research shows that one in four members of the S&E workforce with a master’s degree is foreign and one in three with a doctorate is foreign.

The SEI web site provides a feature with which the reader can create his or her own data sets for a given state.

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15. John Grunsfeld to Lead NASA’s Science Mission Directorate

John Grunsfeld has been chosen as the next associate administrator for the Science Mission Directorate at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The directorate supports research in Earth science, heliophysics, planetary

science, and astrophysics.

Grunsfeld, a physicist and former astronaut, was the deputy director of the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore. The Science Mission Directorate operates many Earth observing missions including Terra, the Solar Radiation and Climate Experiment (SORCE), the NPOESS Preparatory Project (NPP), and the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE). The Landsat Data Continuity Mission (LDCM) is expected to launch in December 2012.

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16. Robert Detrick to Become Assistant Administrator of NOAA

On February 13, 2012, Robert Detrick will take over as the Assistant Administrator of the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), leaving the National Science Foundation (NSF) to find a new director for the Division of Earth Sciences. As the Assistant Administrator of OAR, Detrick will assume the duties of chair of the NOAA Research Council.

Detrick comes to NOAA after serving as Director of the NSF's Division of Earth Sciences since November 2008. Prior to that Detrick served at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) as a Senior Scientist and Vice President for Marine Facilities and Operations for more than 20 years. As a marine geologist, he has been a part of 30 major oceanographic cruises and has more than 100 publications. In 1996, Detrick, an American Geophysical Union (AGU) Fellow, was awarded the A.G. Huntsman Medal for past and present influence on marine scientific thought.

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17. Court Will Review Yucca Mountain Case

The fate of the proposed nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain will be argued at the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia on May 2, 2012. The court will decide whether the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) must continue to review, and ultimately make a decision on, the Department of Energy's (DOE) license application for the repository.

The nuclear power industry pays \$700 million annually in fees to the federal government as a part of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA) of 1982 (P.L 97-425). The fees are for nuclear waste removal to a centralized and permanent nuclear waste repository; however, the federal government has not completed a permanent repository. The Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) is asking the courts to issue a *writ of mandamus* because they believe the NRC is not fulfilling its legal obligation to make a decision on Yucca Mountain. In 2011, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) filed a petition against the NRC asking that the NRC be forced to make a decision on Yucca Mountain. The NARUC believes the NRC is attempting to avoid judicial review by claiming budgetary limitations or by ending the program. The NRC stopped their review in 2010 because the Department of Energy (DOE) withdrew its license application. The NRC is claiming that they cannot legally use other funds from other programs to review for a waste repository license. Washington, South Carolina, the Utility Regulators Group, two counties, and a group of individuals are scheduled to argue for a decision on Yucca Mountain at the hearing in May.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 requires DOE to site, construct, operate, and close a repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. It was amended in 1987 to designate Yucca Mountain as the only site for waste disposal. In 2010, the Obama Administration pulled DOE's licensing application from the NRC and has repeatedly zeroed out funding for Yucca Mountain. The DOE has indicated that Yucca Mountain is not an appropriate site for a nuclear waste repository.

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18. Spanish Oil Rig in Cuban Waters Passes U.S. Assessment

The Scarabeo 9 oil rig owned by the Spanish company Repsol and located 80 miles from the Florida coast in Cuban waters has passed U.S. and international standards for offshore drilling. The company agreed to voluntary inspections. To address concerns about oil rigs outside of U.S. waters but near U.S. territory, Senator Robert Mendez (D-NJ) introduced the Foreign Oil Pollution Act of 2011 (S.1836) to amend the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 to hold companies responsible for spills in non-U.S. waters.

The Foreign Oil Pollution Act would apply to those incidents that are outside of the economic zone of the United States. It would require spills in foreign waters affecting the U.S. to be compensated by the company responsible. Repsol granted permission for U.S. officials to inspect the rig. Though an in-depth analysis showed the rig was fit, there is still concern over Repsol's plans to drill up to 16 wells. Technically the rig is not in U.S. waters, placing it out of range for federal regulations. Nonetheless, U.S. companies and the Coast Guard are being readied to respond to oil spills from any oil rig near U.S. territory. The U.S. is in discussions with Mexico, Jamaica, Cuba, and the Bahamas over joint action procedures for oil spills throughout the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea.

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19. 573 Scientists Request Halt to Arctic Offshore Drilling

On January 23, a group of 573 scientists sent a letter to President Obama requesting him to delay new offshore oil and gas exploration in Arctic waters until scientific analyses of the impacts on the environment of the proposed exploration and

development in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas have been completed. On January 24, during the State of the Union speech, President Obama announced his support for expanded domestic offshore drilling.

The letter asks the administration to address the recommendations of a June, 2011 U.S. Geological Survey study which identified gaps in the scientific knowledge about the Arctic ecosystems. The USGS report, *An Evaluation of the Science Needs to Inform Decisions on Outer Continental Shelf Energy Development in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas*, calls for research on climate change impacts, compilation of geospatial data, further research on the physical and biological environment of the region, evaluation of spill risks, and the development of a comprehensive monitoring program that can detect environmental change and identify the drivers of such change. 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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20. National Ground Water Association Position Paper on Hydraulic Fracturing

As the practice of hydraulic fracturing becomes more prevalent for natural gas extraction in shale formations, more attention has been placed on potential impacts on groundwater and drinking water. The National Ground Water Association (NGWA) released a position paper on January 31, 2012 which seeks to provide principles for policymaking to protect groundwater and drinking water from potential problems associated with hydraulic fracturing.

The position paper identifies possible avenues for negative impacts to groundwater and drinking water including improper well construction, improperly filled or sealed abandoned wells, increased use of freshwater in oil and gas activities, accidents during transport of development chemicals, and improper wastewater disposal. Principles to serve as a foundation for policymaking are offered. The principles include the full disclosure of chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process “to the appropriate government entity,” for state agencies to compile and maintain baseline water well data, for the development of water supply plans in areas where water is scarce, and for abandoned wells in the area of all operations to be identified and properly sealed.

NGWA states in the paper that they “[recognize] that hydraulic fracturing of oil and gas wells is a mature technology and has been a widespread practice for many decades. While no widespread water quality or quantity issues have been definitively documented that are attributable to hydraulic fracturing and related activities at oil and gas well sites, there have been isolated cases where faulty casing installations (including poor cement bonds) or poor management of materials/chemicals at the surface are suspected as having negatively impacted groundwater, surface water, or water wells.” Their conclusive statement reads, “NGWA believes that additional studies, research, and monitoring related to the potential for groundwater contamination from the installation, hydraulic fracturing, operation, and maintenance of oil and gas wells are needed, given the growing use of horizontal wells and hydraulic fracturing.” As a result, the report includes NGWA’s support for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) hydraulic fracturing study.

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21. Chinese Embark on Deep Sea Exploration of South China Sea

China’s new deep sea submersible, *Jiaolong*, provides China and Southeast Asia with a means of deep sea exploration in the South China Sea. Scientists in China have been pushing for 20 years to get funding for deep sea exploration. Funds for a submersible were provided in 2007 when the Chinese government realized their economic growth depended on the security of their shipping lanes and possible mineral wealth from the seafloor.

China’s staking of territory in the South China Sea is causing angst among Southeast Asian countries and other nations that use the sea ways. The shipping lanes may be altered by newly discovered gas hydrate plumes because the presence of gas hydrates may lead to slope instability and potentially massive landslides that could affect navigation. The Chinese will map and examine sediments from the sea floor to gain a better understanding of the environment. In addition, *Jiaolong* will explore sediments on the ocean floor to give researchers a better understanding of the potential for harvesting of gold, copper, lead, zinc, nickel, manganese, cobalt, and iron. The project, South China Sea Deep, was presented at the American Geophysical Union’s 2011 Fall Meeting in San Francisco, CA. This \$24 million investment over eight years is being funded by the National Natural Science Foundation of China. *Jiaolong* will also be part of an Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) project to harvest 570 million tons of deposited river sediments in the South China Sea. Chinese scientists intend to share all findings with the international science community.

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22. NAS Recognizes Geoscientists for their Contributions

The National Academy of Sciences will honor 3 geoscientists and 14 other scientists for their contributions and achievements to their disciplines in 2012. Among the awardees are geoscientists Andrew Knoll, Harry McSween, Jr., and John Waterbury. Knoll will receive the Mary Clark Thompson Medal for “most important service to geology and paleontology.” The Fisher

Professor of Natural History at Harvard University, Knoll is being recognized for his research in Pre-Cambrian paleontology and his “innovative contributions on the paleophysiology and evolution of algae and land plants.”

McSween, the Chancellor’s Professor and Distinguished Professor of Science at the University of Tennessee, will receive the Lawrence Smith Medal “for investigations of meteoric bodies.” McSween is known for his research on the origins of chondritic and achondritic meteorites and his work has contributed to a greater understanding of Mars’s geological history.

Waterbury, a biologist at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, will be awarded the Gilbert Morgan Smith Medal for contributions to marine and freshwater algae. Waterbury discovered and characterized planktonic marine cyanobacteria and is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and of the American Academy of Microbiology.

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23. National Academies to Update 1992 Report on Responsible Science

The National Academy of Sciences’ Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy (COSEPUP) will revise its 1992 report, *Responsible Science: Ensuring the Integrity of the Research Process*. An ad hoc committee will examine the impacts on integrity of globalization, treatment of intellectual property, handling of material and specimens, university oversight, and government oversight. New definitions for research misconduct and basic standards for scientists will be explored as the report seeks to recommend guidelines for research managers, funders, researchers, and compliance officers.

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24. UF, FSU Presidents Suggest Higher Tuitions for STEM Undergraduates

At a hearing before the Florida House of Representatives Committee on Education on January 13, 2012, President Bernie Machen of the University of Florida and President Eric Barron of Florida State University told Chairman Bill Proctor (R-District 20) and the committee that higher tuition rates for students studying science, mathematics, engineering, and technology (STEM) could help pay for the rising costs of maintaining those programs.

Florida Governor Rick Scott (R) has asked universities to push STEM degree production as part of his job creation plan but Florida’s universities, ranking among the lowest in the nation in cost of tuition, need addition revenue to help pay for the expensive research programs. “A STEM degree person should pay more for that than they would, say, an education degree,” Machen told the committee according to the Miami Herald. “If you look at return on investment after graduation, look at the pent-up demand for STEM hires, you can make a good case that since that program costs more you ought to have a (higher) tuition for those programs,” he continued. Barron told the committee that Florida State, in an attempt to improve success rates, has been cutting STEM class sizes and offering more one-on-one research opportunities even though it elevates costs. Though neither president hinted at how much a potential tuition hike would be for STEM graduates, Barron said the differential would be relatively small.

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25. Intelligent Design Bills Introduced in OK, MO, IN, and NH

Six measures to include the teaching of intelligent design and to challenge the theory of evolution in science classes in public schools were introduced in Oklahoma, Missouri, Indiana, and New Hampshire in January, 2012.

Oklahoma State Senator Josh Brecheen (R-District 6) is the sponsor of Senate Bill 1742 which would require the state board of education to assist teachers and administrators in promoting “critical thinking, logical analysis, open and objective discussions of scientific theories including, but not limited to, evolution, the origin of life, global warming, and human cloning.” The bill is similar to the 2008 Louisiana Science Education Act that permits teachers to single out certain scientific theories, including evolution and global warming, as controversial, and to teach alternate theories in Louisiana public schools.

Missouri Representative Rick Brattin (R-MO, District 124) introduced the Missouri Standard Science Act (H.B. 1227) on January 10, 2012 that would require “equal teaching” of evolution and intelligent design in public elementary and secondary schools and public universities. The bill includes several stipulations about the teaching of science that are troubling. “Conjecture concerning a naturalistic process previous to written history as to the occurrence of the process, cause of the process, date of the process, length of time for the process to occur, process conditions, process mechanisms, process materials, or other speculative details shall be taught as theory or hypothesis,” the bill states. Any curriculum of an introductory course at a Missouri “public institution of higher education” in “physics, chemistry, biology, health, physiology, genetics, astronomy, cosmology, geology, paleontology, anthropology, ecology, climatology, or other science topics” would be required to follow the provisions of the bill. Brattin is a co-sponsor of another controversial bill introduced in January (H.B. 1276) that would require governing bodies, principals, and administrators to “create an environment” which allows students to develop their own opinion about controversial issues. The bill contains language which would permit and tolerate teachers who “help students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of the theory of biological and hypotheses of chemical

evolution.”

In Indiana, State Senator Dennis Kruse (R-District 14) introduced a bill (Senate Bill 89) that would amend the Indiana state code to provide that “The governing body of a school corporation may require the teaching of various theories concerning the origin of life, including creation science, within the school corporation.” Kruse chairs the Senate Committee on Education and Career Development and introduced similar legislation in 2000 (House Bill 1356) and 2001 (House Bill 1323) when he served in the Indiana House of Representatives.

New Hampshire Representative Jerry Bergevin (R-District 17) introduced a bill (H.B. 1148) in January that would charge the state board of education to "Require evolution to be taught in the public schools of this state as a theory, including the theorists' political and ideological viewpoints and their position on the concept of atheism." Bergevin's colleagues, Gary Hopper (R-District 7) and John Burt (R-District 7), introduced a bill (H.B. 1427) that would “Require science teachers to instruct pupils that proper scientific inquire results from not committing to any one theory or hypothesis, no matter how firmly it appears to be established, and that scientific and technological innovations based on new evidence can challenge accepted scientific theories or modes.”

The National Center for Science Education (NCSE) monitors state legislation that may affect the teaching of evolution and provides updates on the status of previously introduced anti-evolution bills.

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26. District Court Will Argue Texas's New Electoral Map

Texas is in the midst of revising its electoral districts after the 2010 census, which gave the growing state an additional four congressional seats. The redistricting needs to be completed before the November 2012 elections, but has run into significant problems. Not only are the Republicans and Democrats in the Texas legislature squabbling over districts, but the growing minority of Hispanics is challenging some districts under the Voting Rights Act (P.L. 109-68). The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia will be hearing arguments and making decisions about Texas redistricting in January and February.

The redistricting case, *Perry v Perez*, has pitted Republicans versus Democrats. With four new districts, the two chambers of the Texas Legislature and the Texas delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives must realign the district map. However, Texas is required to get preapproval before realigning congressional districts under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. Texas's two options in getting preapproval are getting clearance from the Department of Justice or getting clearance from the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. Texas chose to get approval from the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia and a hearing for the approval of the proposed realignment is scheduled for late January 2012 and is expected to be concluded in early February 2012.

Unfortunately, the Texas Legislature put the realigned map into effect before the U.S. District Court approved it. The new map is expected to increase the number of Republicans and naturally the Democrats in Texas are against such a shift. Hispanics are concerned because some of the redistricting reduces the concentration of Hispanics and thus their abilities to vote as a block with shared concerns and to elect a Hispanic representative. Hispanic voters have tended to vote for Democrats in the past, which adds partisanship to their challenge. Challengers of the Texas legislature's maps have sought out a three judge panel in the Western District of Texas to draw their own realignment. Republicans, including Texas Governor Rick Perry, have said that the Western District judges are required to defer to the lawmakers even if their maps have not been approved. The legal question in the case of *Perry v Perez* is whether a district court in Texas had the right to create its own map while waiting on the map created by the Texas Legislature to be reviewed.

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27. AGI Welcomes AAPG/AGI Spring Intern Aaron Rodriguez

Aaron Rodriguez joins the American Geosciences Institute (AGI) as the Geoscience Policy Intern for the spring of 2012. The internship program is supported by the American Association of Petroleum Geologists and AGI.

Aaron is a student at Southern Utah University in Cedar City, UT where he will be receiving his Bachelor's of Science (BS) in Geology upon the completion of field camp in the summer of 2012. As a part of his undergraduate research project, Aaron worked on the Miocene River Project in Northern Arizona and Southeast Nevada with Dr. John MacLean. Aaron was a student-athlete for four years at Southern Utah University where he endured the rigors of playing division 1-AA college football. He was active in the community volunteering at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) sponsored events like National Parks Clean Up Day, Youth Scavenger Hunts, and Youth Mountain Bike Rides.

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28. Key Reports and Publications

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

DOD Addressed Many Specified Reporting Elements in Its 2011 Arctic Report but Should Take Steps to Meet Near- and Long-term Needs

The Department of Defense (DOD) submitted an Arctic Report on May 31, 2011 to Congress as requested by House Report 111-491. This Government Accountability Office (GAO) report investigates whether DOD completely and adequately responded to Congress's requests and whether DOD has efforts underway to identify and prioritize the capabilities needed to meet national security needs. Congress asked DOD to assess the status and need for icebreakers to determine whether icebreakers provide important or required mission capabilities to support Arctic strategic national security objectives, and to provide the minimum and optimal number of icebreakers that may be needed. GAO concluded that DOD partially addressed this request but did not include an assessment of the minimum and optimal number of icebreakers. DOD's Arctic Report acknowledges that it has some near-term gaps in key capabilities needed to communicate, navigate, and maintain awareness of activity in the region. However, DOD has not yet evaluated, selected, or implemented alternatives for prioritizing and addressing near-term Arctic capability needs. GAO recommends in this report that DOD complete a risk-based investment strategy for developing Arctic capabilities in the near-term and that DOD and the Coast Guard should establish a forum to discuss collaborative Arctic infrastructure investments in the long-term.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education: Strategic Planning Needed to Better Manage Overlapping Programs across Multiple Agencies

On January 20, 2012, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education programs. The report delved into the effectiveness and efficiency of these programs. It found the lack of a strategic plan, which was evident with 83 percent of programs overlapping with at least one other program. While at the same time the discovery that less than 50 percent of the programs communicated between each other. The report discovered an evaluation report that is lacking in direction, communication, and dispersal. The GAO recommends the devising of a strategic plan in order to create a universal evaluation system as well as the consolidation or extermination of programs.

National Academy of Sciences (NAS)

Renewable Fuel Standard: Potential Economic and Environmental Effects of U.S. Biofuel Policy

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA, P.L. 110-140) amended the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) program at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to increase the volume of renewable fuels from 9 billion gallons in 2008 to 36 billion gallons by 2022. This report evaluates the economic and environmental consequences of increasing biofuel and biodiesel production as a result of the amended RFS. The report found that, absent major technological innovations or policy changes, the congressionally-mandated consumption of 16 billion gallons of cellulosic biofuels is unlikely to be met by 2022. Using economic models, the report shows that biofuels would only become cost-competitive with petroleum-based fuels in an economic environment characterized by high oil prices, technological breakthroughs, and/or a high carbon price. Ultimately, the report concludes, biofuels may not be an effective policy for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emission because the effect of biofuels on GHG emissions depends on how the biofuels are produced and what land-use changes occur in the process.

Recapturing a Future for Space Exploration: Life and Physical Sciences Research for a New Era

In this report, the Committee for the Decadal Survey on Biological and Physical Sciences in Space looked back on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) biological and physical science achievements and provided recommendations to develop a portfolio of research for the coming decade. Arguing that a wide range of biological and physical science research is in NASA's interests, the report cites public excitement and global leadership as two byproducts of a robust biological and physical sciences research program.

Vision and Voyages for Planetary Sciences in the Decade 2013-2022

The Committee on the Planetary Science Decadal Survey compiled this report to track the current state of knowledge of the solar system and provide recommendations for flagship planetary science missions for the coming decade at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The report argues that the Mars Astrobiology Explorer Cacher (MAX-C) should be NASA's highest priority. MAX-C would travel to Mars to try and determine whether the planet ever supported life and to answer questions about Mars' geologic and climatic history. The report mentions a mission to Europa and to Uranus as other recommended large-size missions. The committee suggests the National Science Foundation should expand its funding for existing laboratories and establish new facilities as needed.

A Review of the U.S. Global Change Research Program's Strategic Plan

On September 30, 2011, the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) release its draft strategic plan for 2012-2021. The USGCRP coordinates the efforts of agencies and departments across the federal government participating in global change research. The Committee to Advise the U.S. Global Change Research Program, formed by the National Research Council in 2011, released this report to suggest improvements and provide recommendations on how to achieve the goals proposed in the plan.

U.S. and International Perspectives on Global Science Policy and Science Diplomacy: Report of a Workshop

The National Academies held a workshop in February 2011 with American and International participants to assess effective ways

to meet international challenges through science policy and science diplomacy. This report summarizes the issues that arose during the workshop. Science, the participants agreed, is inherently international which gives it special capacities in advancing communication and cooperation about international challenges. Another fruitful discussion involved the challenges of defining science diplomacy versus diplomacy for science.

Water Reuse: Potential for Expanding the Nation's Water Supply Through Reuse of Municipal Wastewater

This report presents a collection of water treatment options available to mitigate water quality issues in reclaimed water. The use of treated reclaimed water for irrigation, drinking water, and industrial uses could significantly increase the nation's total available water resources. Among the portfolio of techniques, the report found that the risk of exposure to certain microbial and chemical contaminants from drinking reclaimed water does not appear to be higher than the risk experienced in at least some current drinking water treatment systems, and may be orders of magnitude lower. This report recommends adjustments to the federal regulatory framework that could enhance public health protection for planned and unplanned reuse and increase public confidence in water reuse.

Proliferation Risk in Nuclear Fuel Cycles: Workshop Summary

The Department of Energy (DOE) asked the National Academies to hold a public workshop to discuss the capability of current and projected methodologies and metrics for assessing host state proliferation risks to meet the need of policymakers. The workshop, held on August 1-2, 2011, was not intended to result in findings or recommendations. Instead, this report contains a synopsis of the discussions and major themes including nonproliferation and new technologies; separate policy and technical cultures; value of proliferation resistance analysis; and usefulness of social science approaches. A report on improving the assessment of proliferation risks associated with nuclear fuel cycles is expected to be completed in the spring of 2013.

The National Weather Service Modernization and Associated Restructuring: A Retrospective Assessment

From 1989 to 2000, the National Weather Service underwent a Modernization and Associated Restructuring to integrate science into weather service activities and improve outreach and coordination with users of weather information. The process cost an estimated \$4.5 billion. This report presents an assessment of the execution of the restructuring and its impact on weather services in the United States.

Congressional Research Service (CRS)

The EPA Draft Report of Groundwater Contamination Near Pavillion, Wyoming: Main Findings and Stakeholder Responses

On January 25, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) released a report reviewing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) draft report of groundwater contamination from hydraulic fracturing near Pavillion, Wyoming. The CRS report was requested because there was concern the EPA draft report did not explicitly express the relation between groundwater contamination and hydraulic fracturing. CRS found that the EPA report sampled a variety of domestic wells at a variety of depths ranging from 15 feet to 980 feet. The shallow depth contamination was attributed to surface pit contaminants. Contamination from hydraulic fracturing fluids was believed to have occurred at lower depths, which led to the drilling of 980 and 785 feet wells. The intent in the 980 and 785 feet wells was to distinguish between potential shallow groundwater contamination (785 well) and potential deep contamination (980 well). It is of note that the existence of an impermeable stratigraphic layer can result in the contamination of an aquifer at a depth differing from an aquifer at drinking water depth, which will not necessarily lead to the contamination of both aquifers. The EPA report stated although "some natural migration of gas would be expected above a gas field such as Pavillion, data suggest that enhanced migration of gas has occurred to groundwater at depths used for domestic water supply and to domestic wells." At the same time the EPA report acknowledged the lack of baseline data for contaminants in the water prior to the potential contamination. At the end of the CRS report there is a very informative section on the difference between tight sand gas and shale gas and the differences between hydraulic fracturing in deep and shallow wells.

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29. Key Federal Register Notices

The full Federal Register can be found at: <https://www.federalregister.gov>

DOI – The National Park System Advisory Board will be renewed by the Secretary of the Interior as its work is in the public's interest. [January 3, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 1)]

NRC – The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has issued a regulatory guide which describes the types of changes for which fuel cycle facility licensees should seek prior approval from the NRC before implementing. [January 6, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 4)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is holding a series of workshops to solicit the individual views of stakeholders on the use of integrated municipal stormwater and wastewater plans to meet the water quality objectives of the Clean Water Act. Dates and locations of the workshops can be found in the notice. [Wednesday, January 11, 2012 (Volume 77, Number

7)]

NRC – The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) will convene an open teleconference meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Medical Uses of Isotopes on February 7, 2012. [Friday, January 13, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 9)]

NASA – The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announces the open meeting of the Heliophysics Subcommittee of the NASA Advisory Council on February 27 and 28, 2012 at NASA Headquarters. [Tuesday, January 17, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 10)]

DOI – This notice announces the withdrawal of approximately 1,000,000 acres of public and National Forest System lands in the Grand Canyon Watershed from location and entry under the Mining Law of 1872 for a period of 20 years. [Wednesday, January 18, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 11)]

NRC – The Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards Subcommittee on Planning and Procedures, which advises the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), will meet on February 9, 2012 in Rockville, Maryland. The public are permitted to attend. [Wednesday, January 18, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 11)]

NOAA – The National Marine Fisheries Service has extended the comment period for the “Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Effects of Oil and Gas Activities in the Arctic Ocean” to February 28, 2012. [Wednesday, January 18, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 11)]

DOE – The Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technical Advisory Committee will hold an open webinar on February 9, 2012 from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Preregistration is required. [Thursday, January 19, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 12)]

DOE – The National Petroleum Council has been renewed for two years starting in January, 2012. [Thursday, January 19, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 12)]

EPA – The National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology will hold a public meeting in Arlington, Virginia on February 13 and 14, 2012. Information on how to register and an agenda can be found in the notice. [Thursday, January 19, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 12)]

NASA – The International Space Station Advisory Committee will hold an open meeting on February 9, 2012 at National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Headquarters. [Thursday, January 19, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 12)]

NASA – The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is amending its regulations governing compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality's Code of Federal Regulations. The revised regulations are intended to improve NASA's efficiency in implementing NEPA requirements by reducing costs and preparation time while maintaining quality. [Monday, January 23, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 14)]

DOI – The Department of the Interior (DOI) will hold a public meeting of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps Advisory Committee on February 9-10, 2012 in Washington, DC. Information on how to register and the agenda for the meeting can be found in the notice. [Tuesday, January 24, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 15)]

DOE – The Department of Energy (DOE) Biological and Environmental Research Advisory Committee will hold an open meeting on February 16, 2012 in Washington, DC. A location, agenda, and information on how to attend can be found in the notice. [Thursday, January 26, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 17)]

DOE – The Department of Energy (DOE) Environmental Management Advisory Board has been renewed for another two year period effective January 23, 2012. [Monday, January 30, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 19)]

USCG – The Coast Guard is requesting applications for positions on the National Offshore Safety Advisory Committee which advises the Secretary of Homeland Security on matters and actions concerning activities directly involved with or in support of the exploration of offshore mineral and energy resources. [Monday, January 30, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 19)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency is accepting comments on a reconsideration of a proposed rule regarding National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants for nine source categories in the chemical manufacturing sector. Comments are due March 30, 2012. [Monday, January 30, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 19)]

DOE – The Department of Energy (DOE) will begin to charge a higher fee for receipt and management of spent nuclear fuel from foreign research reactors containing uranium enriched in countries with high-income economies, including the United States. [Tuesday, January 31, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 20)]

EPA – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing the proposed reissuance of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permits for oil and gas exploration facilities on the outer continental shelf in the Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea. EPA must have its proposed general permit approved by the state of Alaska before issuing a final permit. [Tuesday, January 31, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 20)]

DOE – There will be an open teleconference of the State Energy Advisory Board on February 16. Information on how to join the call can be found in the notice. [Tuesday, January 31, 2012 (Volume 77, Number 20)]

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30. Key AGI Geoscience Policy Updates

Hearing on the Federal Energy Research and Development Funding (1/24/12)

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Monthly Review prepared by Wilson Bonner and Linda Rowan, Geoscience Policy Staff; Erin Camp, AAPG/AGI Fall 2011 Intern and Aaron Rodriguez, AAPG/AGI Spring 2012 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, Department of Education, Department of Defense, Department of State, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Agriculture, National Center for Science Education, Missouri State Legislature, Oklahoma State Legislature, New Hampshire State Legislature, Indiana State Legislature, Florida State Legislature, National Ground Water Association

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.

Compiled February 3, 2012.
