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November 20, 2017

The Senate Committee on Appropriations released the fiscal year (FY) 2018 appropriations legislation for Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, which outlines their proposed budget for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), and Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), among other agencies. The appropriations bill totals \$32.6 billion in discretionary funding, including \$12.17 billion for the Department of the Interior (DOI).

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS) explained that the legislative proposal establishes a position for working in cooperation with the House of Representatives and the administration to reach a budget agreement, which is likely to be a single large spending package for all federal agencies in FY 2018. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Chair of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations subcommittee, stressed that the bill will “direct federal resources where they are needed by investing in programs aimed to protect our land and people, enable new infrastructure projects to boost the economy, and help communities provide vital, basic services.”

The bill provides \$1.085 billion for the USGS, equal to the FY 2017 enacted amount, with a \$9 million reduction for satellite operations and some program adjustments to fully fund the Landsat system. It also includes slight funding increases from FY 2017 for the National Parks Service (NPS) and Forest Service (USFS).

The committee outlines specific recommendations and priorities in the report language accompanying the bill. In the report, the committee noted their disagreement with reductions to the NPS in the President’s Budget Request that would substantially diminish visitor services and hamper program operations. The committee also rejected the administration’s proposed restructuring of the USGS Climate and Land Use Change program. The committee expects the USGS to work collaboratively with state geological surveys to focus resources toward completing geologic mapping in regions of the country that have high quality mineral and energy resources that remain unmapped at a useable scale. Additionally, the report highlighted the need for advances in hazards monitoring and warning systems, particularly for earthquakes, volcanoes, and landslides, and directed an increase in funds for facilities, deferred maintenance, and capital improvements.

For a complete breakdown of funding levels in the Senate appropriations bills, along with the House appropriations bills and President’s Budget Request, see the American Geosciences Institute’s Overview of Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations.

Source: U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
