



# Geologic Maps as Public Goods

As a ‘public good,’ the value of geologic maps is additive because they are accessed by many users over time to inform actionable decisions across different economic sectors, including construction, energy, infrastructure, and environmental protection. The funding needed to produce geologic maps is offset by savings in time, enhanced economic activity, well-informed policy development, and reduction of potentially expensive changes in project planning.



## Non-rival

Multiple people can use the same map without reducing its value.



## Accessible

Geologic maps are vital components of the Nation’s information infrastructure, available and accessible to all.



## Universal

Encourages widespread use across sectors, maximizing societal benefits.



IMAGE CREDIT: USGS

Once a government-funded geologic map is made, it becomes freely accessible. Anyone can download a geologic map from a government website and benefit from it without directly paying for its creation and without it being ‘consumed’.

The value of geologic maps lie not just in the raw data but in the interpretation by experts. Skilled analysis makes these maps highly impactful for reducing costs and uncertainties in projects.

## Reference:

Berg, R.C., and Faulds, J.E., eds., 2025, Economic Analysis of the Costs and Benefits of Geological Mapping in the United States of America from 1994 to 2019: Alexandria, Virginia, American Geosciences Institute, 184 p.

**Source:** Chapter 11

