

Opening Statement of Chairman Mike Simpson
US Geological Survey FY13 Budget Hearing
March 6, 2012

Good afternoon, Director McNutt. I'd like to welcome you, along with Deputy Director Suzette Kimball and your Associate Director for Budget, Carla Burzyk. Thank you all for being here today.

What a difference a year makes.

Just a year ago, this Subcommittee was sent a USGS budget proposal that would have cut \$89 million and 230 FTEs from core science programs, largely to pay for an ill-conceived plan for the future of Landsat.

I think it's fair to say that the Congress roundly rejected last year's proposal, and that the Administration has paid attention. I want to thank you for sending us an FY13 proposal that I think we can work with.

The FY13 proposed budget for the USGS is a net \$34 million increase over the FY12 enacted level, including an increase of \$11 million for fixed costs and \$123 million in total program increases and decreases. Major increases are proposed for hydraulic fracturing research, the WaterSMART initiative, ecosystems science, disaster response, and climate change.

Funding these increases once again creates holes that this subcommittee will likely have to fill, but I want to work with you to see if we can do so in a way that is sensitive to both the strategic direction of the agency and the program priorities of Congress.

For example, water programs are looking at a net decrease of \$4.8 million and 45 FTE in this budget proposal. But contained within that net decrease is over \$45 million in total program changes. Clearly you are trying to take water programs in a different direction. I hope that we

can talk today and in the coming months about where you're trying to go, whether and how you're consistent with your strategic plan, and how you're measuring success.

Another area I think we need to take a hard look at is the Mineral Resources program, which is cut by \$4.3 million in this proposal. The USGS is mandated to collect, report, and analyze data on the supply of minerals critical to the Nation's economic and defense needs. I question whether the cuts taken in FY12 and the additional cuts proposed in FY13 will compromise the USGS's ability to carry out this important mission.

Finally, I hope that we can talk today about the direction of biological research at the USGS in relation to the other Interior bureaus. When Interior's biological research capacity was moved to the Biological Resources Division of the USGS in the 1990's, the program was charged with providing research support for Interior bureaus, including the independent, peer-reviewed science needed for threatened and endangered species listings, permitting, and de-listings.

Today, the Biological Resources Division of the USGS has been replaced by an Ecosystems program; Interior bureaus either have already re-built their biological science capacity (as is the case with the Park Service) or are in the process of doing so (as is the case with the Fish and Wildlife Service); and, out of a \$177 million Ecosystems budget and a \$68 million Climate Change budget, there is but one line item of \$9 million for Science Support for DOI Bureaus.

It may well be that this train has already left the station, and, if so, I might be well advised to not stand in front of it. However, I do think it is fair, in light of where we seem to be headed, to evaluate the direction of the USGS's Ecosystems program, where it is headed and why, and how it measures success.

These are just a few of the areas of the proposed budget where I have questions and concerns, and so I look forward to our discussion today and I appreciate your help in providing the Committee with the information it needs to do its job.

With that, I'm happy to yield to the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Moran, for any opening remarks he may have.