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The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS): Background and FY2024 Appropriations

Background

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), in the Department of the Interior (DOI), provides scientific information about geologic processes to mitigate risks from natural hazards and to support the management of water, energy, mineral, ecosystem, and land resources. The USGS also collects long-term Earth observations to understand geologic and ecosystem processes, using satellite imagery, mapping, and ground-based instruments to measure changes. In contrast to some other DOI bureaus, the USGS has no regulatory authority and does not manage lands.

Congress created the USGS in 1879 in the USGS Organic Act (43 U.S.C. §31). The USGS Organic Act defined the initial scope of the USGS:

[The Director of the USGS] shall have the direction of the United States Geological Survey, and the classification of the public lands and examination of the geological structure, mineral resources, and products of the national domain.

Since 1879, Congress has expanded the USGS’s statutory authorities to include activities related to water resources, ecosystems, and natural hazards. The USGS conducts scientific activities under interdisciplinary mission areas, and each mission area has its own budget line (Table 1). The USGS also has budget lines for Science Support (administrative activities and information) and Facilities. Congress typically appropriates funds for the agency through annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations acts.

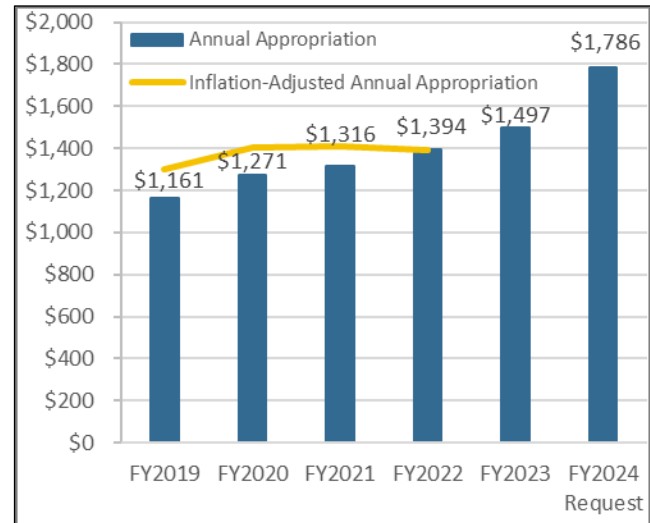
FY2024 Budget Request

The President’s budget request for USGS appropriations in FY2024 is \$1.786 billion, \$288.3 million more than FY2023 annual appropriations of \$1.497 billion provided by Division G of P.L. 117-328 (a 19% increase; Figure 1). For FY2023, the President requested a 23% increase over FY2022 annual appropriations of \$1.394 billion. The FY2023 annual appropriation provided a 7% increase over FY2022 annual appropriations.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58) provided the USGS with \$510.7 million in supplemental appropriations, \$69.0 million of which are first made available in FY2024. This total includes \$64.0 million for the Earth Mapping Resources Initiative and \$5.0 million for the National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program. The USGS has provided information (including at the end of its FY2024 Budget Justification) on how the agency plans to spend its IIJA funding. The funding is to support science to address critical mineral information and to preserve geological data.

Figure 1. USGS Annual Appropriations, FY2019 to FY2023, and FY2024 Budget Request

(nominal \$, in millions)



Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS), based on enacted appropriations laws and the President’s FY2024 request.

Note: FY2019-FY2022 amounts are adjusted for inflation to FY2022 dollars, using FY2024 Budget of the United States Government, Historical Tables, Table I0.1.

Table 1. USGS Funding: FY2022 and FY2023 Annual Appropriations and FY2024 Budget Request

(nominal \$, in millions)

Mission Area or Budget Line	FY2022 Enacted	FY2023 Enacted	FY2024 Requested
Ecosystems	277.9	307.2	395.0
Energy and Mineral Resources	95.2	104.2	150.8
Natural Hazards	186.0	200.3	226.2
Water Resources	285.9	304.4	313.4
Core Science Systems	263.8	284.6	368.6
Science Support	99.7	106.3	134.2
Facilities	184.8	188.1	197.5
Total	1,394.4	1,497.2	1,785.5

Sources: FY2024 U.S. Geological Survey Budget Justification and explanatory statements accompanying P.L. 117-103 and P.L. 117-328.

Note: Table figures may not add to totals shown due to rounding and Congressionally Directed Spending items in FY2022 and FY2023.

The following sections summarize USGS mission areas and selected programs in the FY2024 budget request.

Ecosystems Mission Area

The Ecosystems mission area conducts biological and ecological science to inform natural resource management decisions through five programs and cooperative research units. The FY2024 budget requests a 29% increase above the FY2023 enacted level for the mission area. Specifically, the budget request proposes an increase of \$24.2 million above the FY2023 enacted level of \$63.1 million for the National and Regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers, which are university-based research centers that help resource managers understand and adapt to climate change impacts. Similar to FY2022 and FY2023 budget requests, other requested funding increases for FY2024 across the mission area include science to support conservation and adaptive management of DOI land, to inform decisionmaking for clean energy development on federal land and water, to quantify ecosystem services, and to understand climate impacts on ecosystems. The budget also requested decreases for some activities in the mission area.

Energy and Mineral Resources Mission Area

The Energy and Mineral Resources mission area includes scientific research and assessments related to energy and minerals. The FY2024 budget requests a 45% increase above the FY2023 enacted annual appropriations for the mission area. Under the Energy Resources Program, the request includes an increase of \$24.0 million above the FY2023 enacted level of \$33.4 million to support activities related to geologic carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas inventory and reduction tools for federal lands, among other activities. Under the Mineral Resources Program, the request includes an increase of \$22.5 million above the FY2023 enacted level of \$70.9 million to support supply chain research and forecasts, assessments of potential new sources of critical minerals, and mine waste research and assessment in support of reclamation and mineral recovery.

Natural Hazards Mission Area

The Natural Hazards mission area provides scientific information to reduce losses from natural hazards. The FY2024 budget requests a 13% increase above the FY2023 enacted level for the mission area. This increase includes a \$19.9 million increase for the Coastal/Marine Hazards and Resources Program to improve coastal hazard modeling and forecasting, coastal resilience and risk reduction, and assessments of carbon sequestration in coastal environments (i.e., blue carbon). The increase also includes \$9.6 million under the Earthquake Hazards Program for subduction zone and induced seismicity science and infrastructure technology for earthquake analysis, among other items. The budget requests decreases for the Volcano and Landslide Hazards Programs (-\$1.7 million and -\$2.7 million, respectively) compared to FY2023 enacted levels.

Water Resources Mission Area

The Water Resources mission area monitors water resources and researches water processes. The FY2024 budget requests a 3% increase above the FY2023 enacted level for the mission area. The budget requests increased funding for water assessments and observations through Integrated Water Availability Assessments, the Next

Generation Water Observing System, and Federal Priority Streamgages. The requested increase also includes science related to water withdrawals, fire and drought impacts, and ecological flows. The budget also requested decreases for some activities in the mission area.

Core Science Systems Mission Area

The Core Science Systems mission area generally focuses on the USGS's mapping activities and supports science across the agency. The mission area includes the National Land Imaging Program, which operates the Landsat satellite program, among other activities. The FY2024 budget requests a 30% increase above the FY2023 enacted annual appropriations for the mission area, which includes

- an increase of \$30.0 million for a high-performance computing initiative to advance USGS science data delivery, particularly for drought and fire science;
- an increase of \$24.6 million for the creation of an American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas, by utilizing the USGS's Protected Areas Database of the U.S., to inform conservation decisions for the Administration's America the Beautiful Initiative; and
- an increase of \$10.0 million for the Federal Geographic Data Committee to create a federal climate data portal.

The increase also would support Landsat activities, including an increase of \$12.0 million for Landsat Next development and an increase of \$5.0 million for a new commercial data pilot program. The request includes decreases for various mapping activities.

Science Support and Facilities Budget Lines

The Science Support budget line includes funding to provide business services and information technology management to operate USGS science programs. The FY2024 budget requests a 26% increase above the FY2023 enacted level for the budget line, which would fund initiatives that aim to strengthen scientific integrity and diversity, invest in cloud and high-performance computing, and improve cybersecurity controls, among other activities. The Facilities budget line includes funding for rent, facility operations and maintenance, and deferred maintenance and repair. The FY2024 budget requests a 5% increase above the FY2023 enacted level for the budget line.

Issues for Congress

Congress many consider varied issues related to USGS appropriations for FY2024, including the following. Most broadly, Congress is likely to evaluate the President's overall increase of 19% for the USGS compared to FY2023 annual appropriations, as well as proposed decreases for various activities. Also, Congress may weigh supplemental appropriations provided for FY2023 (\$110.0 million) and the \$69.0 million in IJA advance appropriations for FY2024. Further, Congress may consider whether to fund specific funding requests from Members in FY2024. P.L. 117-328 funded \$2.1 million in Congressionally Directed Spending for the USGS in FY2023. In FY2024, it appears the Senate may allow such Member requests for the USGS at the outset of the appropriations process, but the House appropriations process may not.

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