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The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS): Background and FY2025 Appropriations

Background

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), in the Department of the Interior (DOI), provides scientific information to support the management of water, energy, mineral, ecosystem, and land resources and to mitigate risks from natural hazards. The USGS also collects long-term data to understand and report on the Earth’s geologic and ecosystem processes, using satellite imagery, mapping, and ground-based instruments. The USGS has no regulatory authority and does not manage federal 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.

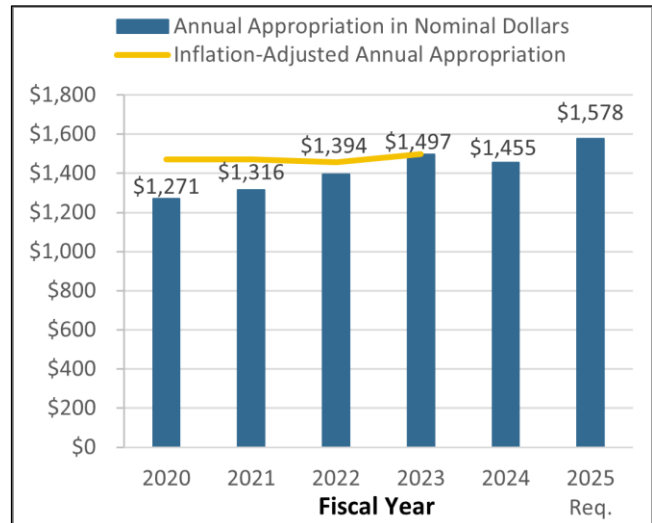
Since 1879, Congress has expanded the USGS’s statutory authority to “such examinations outside the national domain where determined by the Secretary [of the Interior] to be in the national interest.” This expansion has included activities related to water resources, ecosystems, and natural hazards that span the globe. The USGS conducts scientific activities under interdisciplinary mission areas, and each mission area has its own budget line (see **Table 1** for the mission areas). The USGS also has budget lines for Science Support (administrative activities and information) and Facilities. Congress typically appropriates funds for the USGS through annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations acts.

FY2025 Budget Request

The President’s budget request for USGS appropriations in FY2025 is \$1.578 billion, \$122.9 million more than FY2024 annual appropriations of \$1.455 billion provided by Division of E of P.L. 118-42 (an 8% increase; **Figure 1**). For FY2024, the President requested a 19% increase over FY2023 annual appropriations of \$1.497 billion. The FY2024 annual appropriation provided a 3% decrease compared with FY2023 annual appropriations.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58) provided the USGS supplemental appropriations of \$510.7 million, \$69.0 million of which are first made available in FY2025. This total includes \$64.0 million for the Earth Mapping Resource Initiative (Earth MRI) and \$5.0 million for the National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program. The IIJA funding for the USGS is to support scientific studies that address critical mineral information and geological data preservation.

Figure 1. USGS Annual Appropriations, FY2020-FY2024, and FY2025 Budget Request
(in millions)



Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS), based on enacted appropriations laws and the President’s FY2025 budget request.

Note: The yellow line shows FY2020-FY2023 amounts as adjusted for inflation to FY2023 dollars, using FY2025 Budget of the U.S. Government, Historical Tables, Table 10.1.

Table 1. USGS Funding: FY2023 and FY2024 Annual Appropriations and FY2025 Budget Request
(nominal \$, in millions)

Mission Area or Budget Line	FY2023 Enacted	FY2024 Enacted	FY2025 Requested
Ecosystems	307.2	299.4	326.1
Energy and Mineral Resources	104.2	101.1	120.3
Natural Hazards	200.3	198.6	210.6
Water Resources	304.4	288.8	309.6
Core Science Systems	284.6	273.2	313.0
Science Support	106.3	105.0	118.2
Facilities	188.1	184.1	180.4
Total	1,497.2	1,455.4	1,578.3

Sources: FY2025 U.S. Geological Survey budget justification and explanatory statements accompanying P.L. 117-328 and P.L. 118-42.

Note: Table figures do not add to totals shown due to rounding and congressionally directed spending items in FY2023 (\$2.1 million) and FY2024 (\$5.2 million).

The following sections summarize USGS mission areas and selected programs in the FY2025 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 FY2025 budget requests a 9% increase above the FY2024 enacted level for this mission area. The largest program increase for the mission area is for the Land Management Research Program, requested at \$60.6 million for FY2025 compared with \$52.0 million enacted for FY2024. The increase includes supporting science for mapping corridors of big game hunting populations and for drought response. The budget request proposes decreases for some activities in the mission area, including a decrease of \$1.0 million for the Biological Threats and Invasive Species Research Program. It proposes to separate the land change science component of the Climate Adaptation Science Centers and Land Change Science Program into a stand-alone program named the Ecosystems Change Research Program to ensure “program and budget clarity.”

Energy and Mineral Resources Mission Area

The Energy and Mineral Resources mission area includes scientific research and assessments related to energy and minerals. The FY2025 budget requests a 19% increase above the FY2024 enacted level for the mission area. For the Energy Resources Program, the budget requests an increase of \$7.1 million above the FY2024 enacted level of \$32.6 million, which includes supporting activities related to geologic carbon sequestration and geothermal energy. For the Mineral Resources Program, the budget requests an increase of \$12.1 million above the FY2023 enacted level of \$68.7 million, which includes supporting critical minerals supply chain analysis and forecasting. The request also proposes to restructure the Mineral Resources Program into two components: the National Minerals Information Center and Mineral Resources Research, Surveys, and Assessments. The USGS asserts that the restructuring would increase budget transparency for the National Minerals Information Center. The agency anticipates requesting that the U.S. Chief Statistician within the Office of Management and Budget designate the center as a Recognized Statistical Unit (see 44 U.S.C. §3563).

Natural Hazards Mission Area

The Natural Hazards mission area provides scientific information to reduce losses from natural hazards. The FY2025 budget requests a 6% increase above the FY2024 enacted level for the mission area. This increase includes a \$7.3 million increase for the Coastal and Marine Hazards and Resources Program to support research to inform climate-related risk assessments, among other activities. It also includes a \$2.2 million increase for both the Earthquake Hazards Program and the Volcano Hazards Program. The budget requests decreased funding for some activities in the mission area, including a decrease of \$0.4 million for the Landslide Hazards Program.

Water Resources Mission Area

The Water Resources mission area monitors water resources and researches water processes. The FY2025 budget requests a 7% increase above the FY2024 enacted level for the mission area. This includes increased funding for Integrated Water Availability Assessments, federal priority streamgages, and the National Groundwater Quality Network. Similar to past budget requests, the Administration requests eliminating the Water Resources Research Act Program, a federal-state partnership that conducts regional water research. The budget also requests 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 Landsat satellites, among other activities. The FY2025 budget requests a 15% increase above the FY2024 enacted level for the mission area. This includes an increase of \$28.7 million for the National Land Imaging Program, which would support Landsat activities, including Landsat Next development, and a commercial data pilot program. The FY2025 budget also requests increases for a high performance computing initiative to advance USGS science data delivery, particularly for drought and fire science, and for an American conservation and stewardship atlas. The budget request also proposes decreases for some activities in the mission area, including a decrease of \$3.4 million for the National Geospatial Program.

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 FY2025 budget requests a 13% increase above the FY2024 enacted level for the budget line, which includes supporting USGS laboratories and zero-emissions vehicles. The Facilities budget line includes funding for rent, facility operations and maintenance, and deferred maintenance and repair. The FY2025 budget requests a 2% decrease from the FY2024 enacted level for the budget line. Under the budget line, the USGS proposes to change the name for the sub-activity “Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvement” to “Facilities Maintenance, Modernization, and Restoration” to standardize DOI terms and definitions.

Issues for Congress

Congress may evaluate the President’s request for a total increase of 8% for the USGS compared with FY2024 annual appropriations, as well as proposed increases and decreases for various activities. Congress also may weigh the IJA supplemental appropriations provided for FY2024 and advance appropriations for FY2025 (\$69.0 million each) when deliberating on discretionary funding for various activities that are funded by the IJA. Further, Congress may consider whether to fund specific requests from Members in FY2025. For example, P.L. 118-42 funded \$5.2 million in congressionally directed spending items, also known as earmarks, for the USGS in FY2024. Congress also may consider the reorganization and renaming proposals related to the USGS in the FY2025 budget request.

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