

Final FY 2000 Appropriations -

Congress Approves Declining Funding for Interior R&D

(The complete series of AAAS R&D Funding Updates is available on the AAAS R&D Web Site (<http://www.aaas.org/spp/R&D>) in the "FY 2000 R&D" or the "What's New" sections.)

Late last week, Congress gave final approval to an FY 2000 Interior appropriations bill that funds R&D in the Department of the Interior as part of a five-bill omnibus spending package. The Interior bill **provides \$562 million for Interior R&D, \$5 million or 0.9 percent below the FY 1999 funding level** (see Table; all figures are adjusted to reflect a 0.38 percent across-the-board cut in all FY 2000 appropriations).

The **U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)** is the primary sponsor of R&D in Interior. Its total FY 2000 appropriation is \$821 million, \$18 million less than the request but \$23 million or 2.9 percent above FY 1999 (see Table). Nearly two-thirds of the USGS budget is for R&D activities, for a total of \$496 million (down 0.2 percent). Although Interior proposed a major budget restructuring in the FY 2000 request, including the creation of an Integrated Science account for multi-disciplinary projects and integrated ecosystem studies, the final Interior bill funds USGS under the old account structure and allows these studies and projects to be funded through the old accounts. The Interior bill permits two other proposed accounts, Science Support and Facilities, to be created. Because of the transitions between the old account structure, the proposed new account structure, and the new approved account structure, the 0.2 percent estimated cut in USGS R&D may actually turn out to be a slight increase, depending on how USGS allocates its costs based on the appropriation.

USGS is one of the leading federal sponsors of earth sciences research, along with the Department of Energy, the National Science Foundation, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Within the earth sciences, USGS is particularly important in geological hazards research, including research on earthquakes and volcanoes. The earth sciences program in USGS receives a 6.4 percent increase over the comparable amount in FY 1999. USGS is also a leading sponsor of water resources research, which receives a 2.7 percent increase, and biological research, which increases to \$137 million. Most of this research is conducted within Interior labs to address the science needs of Interior's other agencies, such as the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of Interior's research portfolio (excluding development and R&D facilities) by discipline, most of it funded by USGS. USGS work in earth sciences and water resources falls under the environmental sciences category, which accounts for a majority of Interior's R&D. Biological research in USGS is classified under life sciences, which accounts for a quarter of the Interior portfolio.

The FY 2000 increase to Interior R&D becomes a cut after adjusting for inflation. Interior R&D has declined sharply since FY 1994, primarily because of the elimination of the Bureau of Mines in FY 1996 and the merging of the National Biological Service into USGS, but also because of a gradual erosion in purchasing power due to several years of budget cuts in the mid-1990s. The FY 2000 funding level is more than a third below the peak FY 1994 funding level.

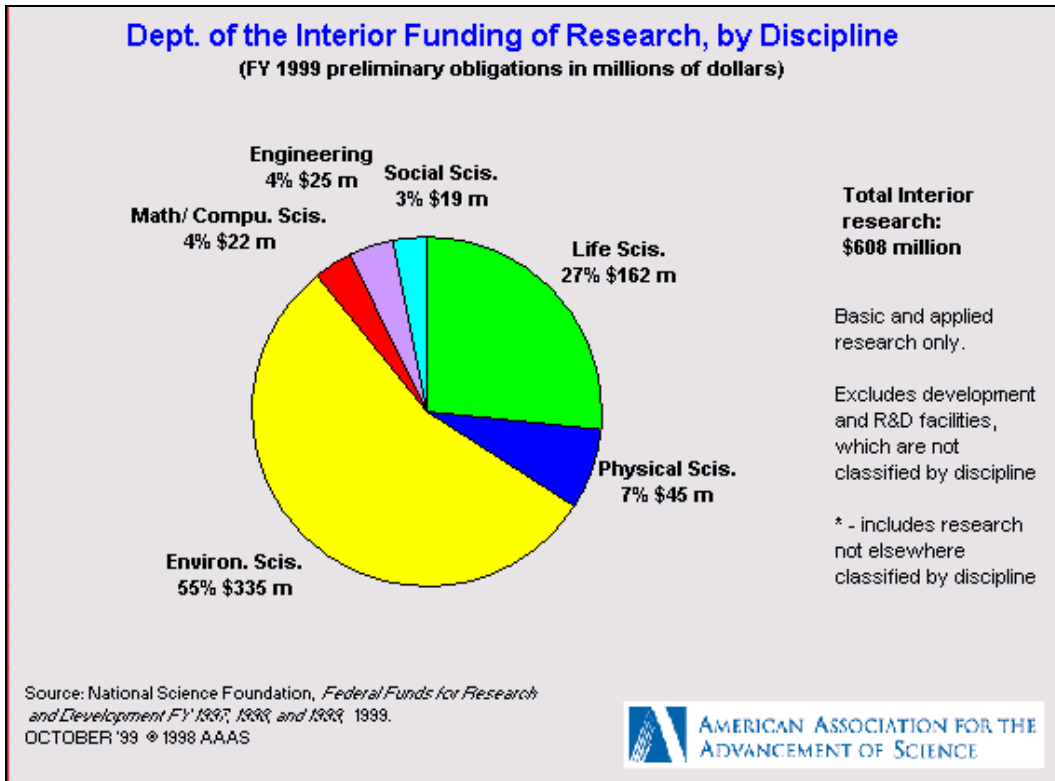


Figure 1.

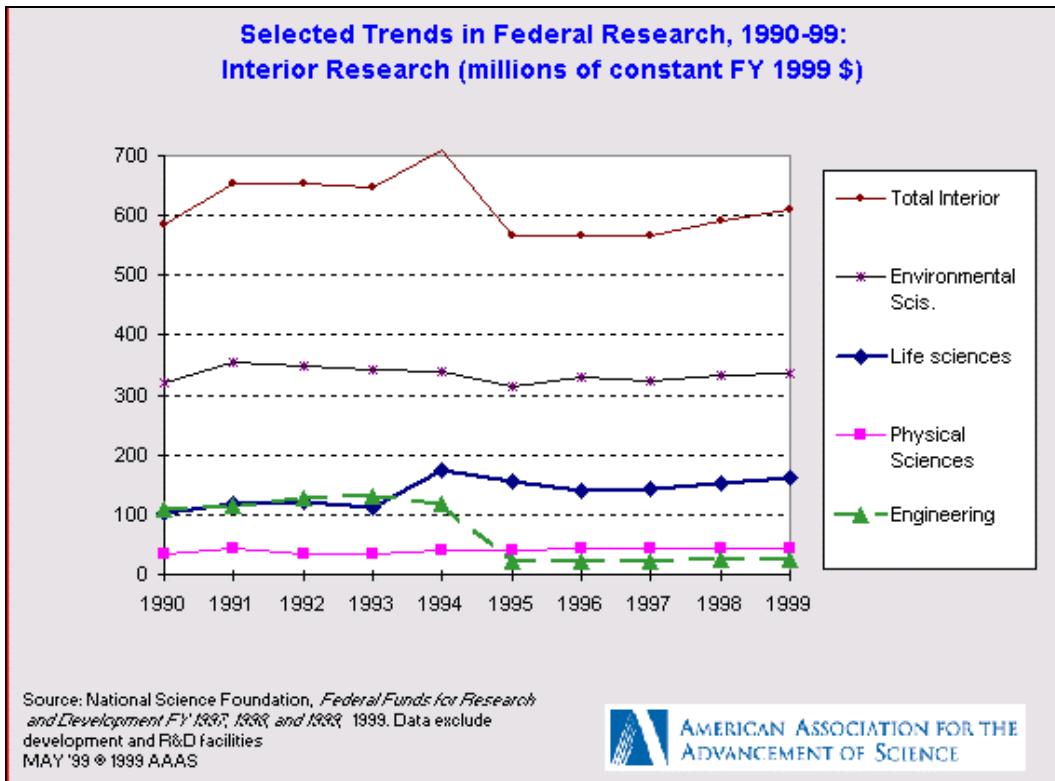


Figure 2.

As a result of these cuts, Interior support for research has also declined and will continue to decline in FY 2000. As shown in Figure 2, Interior support of research has followed trends in total Interior R&D and declined since FY 1994 in real terms. The most prominent drop is engineering

research, which was almost entirely eliminated with the closure of the Bureau of Mines. Life sciences research increased with the creation of the National Biological Service, but small cuts in subsequent years has eroded support. Interior support for environmental sciences research has fared better than other disciplines, but the long-term trend is downward as inflation eats away at purchasing power.

The Interior bill emerged from House-Senate conference more than a month ago and won House and Senate approval, but the congressional leadership never sent it to the President for his signature because of an almost-certain veto. Instead, it was bundled with four other appropriations bills into a single FY 2000 omnibus bill after its funding levels but especially its legislative provisions were renegotiated. The omnibus bill's treatment of Interior R&D is nearly identical to the original bill, except for a 0.38 percent across-the-board cut for all FY 2000 appropriations.

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**Table. Department of the Interior
Congressional Action on R&D in the FY 2000 Budget (FINAL)
(budget authority in millions of dollars)**

	FY 1999 Estimate	FY 2000 Request	Action by Congress				
			FY 2000 FINAL	Chg. from Request Amount	Percent	Chg. from FY 1999 Amount	Percent
U.S. Geological Survey: ¹							
Surveys, Investigations, and Research (SIR):							
National Mapping	23	24	25	1	3.5%	2	8.1%
Geologic Resources	199	199	212	13	6.5%	13	6.4%
Water Resources	119	119	122	4	3.1%	3	2.7%
Biological Research	126	125	137	12	9.7%	12	9.2%
Integrated Science	30	48	0	-48	-100.0%	-30	-100.0%
Total USGS R&D	497	514	496	-18	-3.5%	-1	-0.2%
<i>(USGS Non-R&D SIR Activities)</i>	<i>301</i>	<i>324</i>	<i>324</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0.1%</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>7.9%</i>
<i>(Total USGS SIR Budget)</i>	<i>798</i>	<i>838</i>	<i>821</i>	<i>-18</i>	<i>-2.1%</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>2.9%</i>
Bureau of Reclamation	10	10	9	-1	-12.8%	-1	-12.8%
National Park Service	34	34	30	-4	-11.8%	-4	-11.8%
Bureau of Land Management	1	1	1	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Minerals Management Service	25	25	26	1	5.6%	1	5.6%
Total Interior R&D	567	584	562	-22	-3.8%	-5	-0.9%

AAAS estimates of R&D in FY 2000 appropriations bills. Includes conduct of R&D and R&D facilities.

All figures are rounded to the nearest million. Changes calculated from unrounded figures.

¹ USGS restructuring proposed for FY 2000. FY 1999 figures adjusted for comparability.

This table may understate FY 2000 Final R&D because of differences in appropriated accounts.

Includes across-the-board reduction.

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