

Congress Finalizes USGS R&D Increase for 2008

AAAS R&D Funding Update on Interior R&D in FY 2008 Final Appropriations

Highlights

- **R&D in Interior's lead science agency, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), would increase 3.4 percent or \$19 million to \$583 million in the final 2008 appropriation, well above a requested cut (see Table).**
- Congress once again restores funding to requested cuts in mineral resources R&D and water R&D programs, and also adds \$7 million in new money for USGS climate change research.
- R&D in the Department of the Interior would gain 4.2 percent to \$661 million in 2008, reversing a downward trend in Interior R&D funding for six of the last seven years.

USGS R&D in FY 2008 Final Appropriations

On December 26, President Bush signed into law the FY 2008 omnibus appropriations bill (HR 2764) that had cleared Congress a week earlier, bringing the 2008 appropriations process to a close. The omnibus bill included a final version of the FY 2008 Interior appropriations bill providing funding for the Department of the Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other natural resources and environment programs.

The Department of the Interior manages most of the publicly owned lands in the United States, from the national park system to Indian lands to publicly owned mines. R&D to support Interior's land management responsibilities totals \$661 million in FY 2008 (up 4.2 percent), in contrast to a requested cut (see Table).

The **U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)** is the primary sponsor of R&D in Interior. USGS is one of the leading federal sponsors of earth sciences research. Within the earth sciences, USGS is particularly important in geological hazards research, including research on earthquakes and volcanoes. USGS is also a leading sponsor of water resources research and biological research. The President's budget proposed \$975 million for the earth sciences-oriented USGS budget, a cut of \$13 million from the 2007 level after adjusting for emergency appropriations enacted at the end of May. But in the omnibus bill Congress approved \$1.0 billion for USGS, an \$18 million increase (see Table).

USGS R&D totals \$583 million in the FY 2008 final appropriation, an increase of \$19 million or 3.4 percent instead of a requested cut (see Table). Just over half of the USGS budget is devoted to R&D activities, with the remainder going for science support, data gathering and dissemination, facilities operations, mapping, and natural hazards reduction. **R&D funding would increase in all four USGS research divisions, and there would also be \$7 million in new funding for climate change research.**

The Geologic Hazards, Resources, and Processes Division would see its R&D funding increase 2.5 percent to \$219 million instead of falling by 7 percent, in a repeat of an annual ritual in which USGS proposes to cut the mineral resources program nearly in half but both the House and Senate intervene to keep funding at current levels. As in past years, Congress strongly disagrees with USGS' rationale that minerals research could be funded by the private sector, and reaffirms the federal role in minerals research with restored funding of \$52 million instead of the \$30 million request. In another earth sciences-related division, Geographic Research would increase \$1 million to \$46 million.

Water Resources R&D would stay flat at \$126 million instead of a requested cut. USGS put forward its perennial proposal to eliminate federal funding for the water resources research institutes for a savings of \$5 million, but as in past years Congress rejected the proposal and would preserve the federal role in these cooperatively funded institutes, at a funding level of \$6 million in 2008. The Cooperative Water Program would be funded at \$63 million; this program supports the collection of basic hydrologic data, studies of specific water-resources problems, and hydrologic research through USGS partnerships with state governments and other entities. There would be a slight increase for the National Water Quality Assessment Program (NAWQA) to \$65 million; NAWQA is charged with monitoring the nation's water quality, and its data are used by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and many state regulatory agencies. USGS biological research programs would increase \$4 million to \$180 million.

The omnibus bill would follow the House's lead in adding \$7 million to the USGS budget specifically for climate change research (see Table) for "vital research efforts of Survey scientists related to various aspects of global climate change," according to report language accompanying the House Interior bill. Although details are sketchy, the funds would presumably be distributed among the four USGS research divisions.

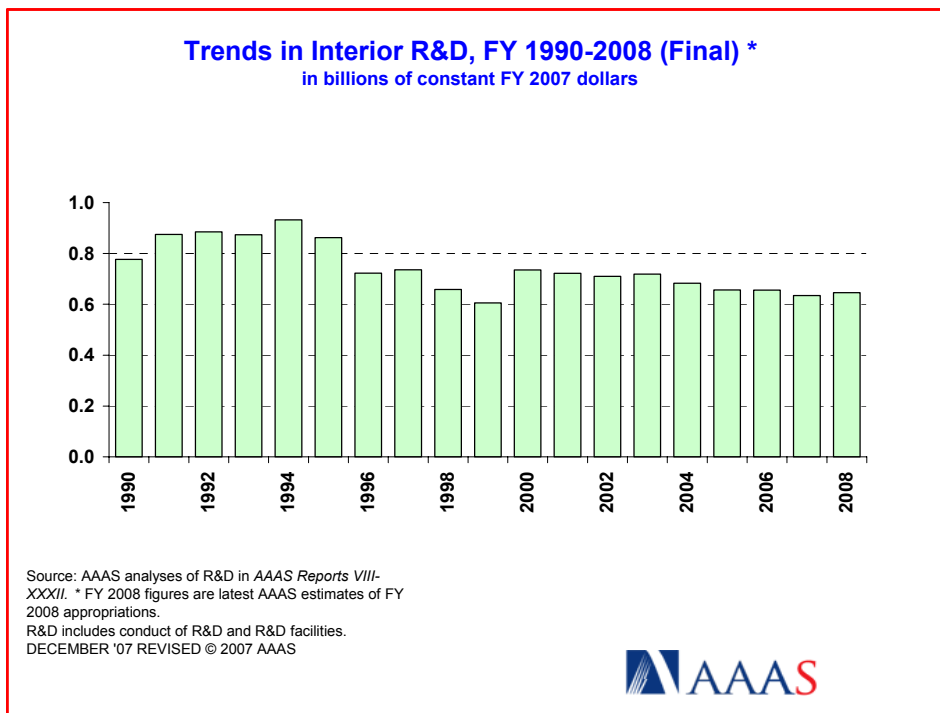


Figure 1. (click on the image for PDF)

Other Interior Agencies

Although USGS is the primary science agency in Interior, four other Interior bureaus also fund R&D (see Table). These include funds for minerals and mining research in the Minerals and Management Service (MMS), wildfire prevention research in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), water resources research in the Bureau of Reclamation, and R&D for the Florida Everglades restoration and other park-related projects in the National Park Service. R&D funding for all four agencies would increase in 2008.

Impacts of the FY 2008 Interior Budget

Congressional appropriators have signaled that environmental science will be a key priority, especially in the area of climate change, and that they will try to reverse recent budget trends. The FY 2008 increase for Interior R&D would be a small break from recent trends, in which Interior R&D has declined in real terms for six of the last seven years (see Figure 1). 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 former National Biological Service into USGS in the mid-1990s. After a large increase in FY 2000, Interior R&D has been mostly flat since then, resulting in steady losses after adjusting for inflation. 84 percent of Interior's R&D is performed in-house, with only 8 percent performed at universities and colleges. Industries, state governments, and nonprofits combined perform the remaining 8 percent of Interior R&D.

Outlook and Next Steps

USGS and its sister Interior agencies enter calendar year 2008 with their final FY 2008 budgets, just weeks before the early February release of the President's FY 2009 budget request. Although USGS did relatively well in the final 2008 omnibus bill, the FY 2009 budget request will most likely contain cuts in USGS R&D programs, which Congress will once again try to reverse in the 2009 appropriations season.

(This analysis is one of a series of AAAS R&D Funding Updates on FY 2008 congressional appropriations. The complete series of AAAS R&D Funding Updates, including continually updated analyses of R&D in FY 2008 appropriations, is available on the AAAS R&D Web Site (<http://www.aaas.org/spp/rd>) in the "FY 2008 R&D" or the "What's New" sections.)

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Table. Dept. of the Interior R&D in FY 2008 House-Senate Conference

**Table. Department of the Interior
House-Senate Conference on R&D in the FY 2008 Budget
(budget authority in millions of dollars)**

	FY 2007 Estimate	FY 2008 Request	House-Senate Conference				
			FY 2008 CONF.	Chg. from Request Amount	Percent	Chg. from FY 2007 Amount	Percent
U.S. Geological Survey:							
Surveys, Investigations, and Research (SIR):							
Geographic Research	44	42	46	3	7.6%	1	3.3%
Geologic Hazards, Resources	214	198	219	21	10.6%	5	2.5%
Water Resources	126	119	126	7	6.2%	0	0.1%
Biological Research	176	181	180	-1	-0.7%	4	2.2%
Climate Change Research 1/	0	0	7	7	--	7	--
Enterprise Information	5	7	6	-1	-14.8%	1	17.1%
Total USGS R&D	564	547	583	37	6.7%	19	3.4%
<i>(USGS Non-R&D SIR Activities)</i>	<i>424</i>	<i>428</i>	<i>423</i>	<i>-5</i>	<i>-1.2%</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-0.1%</i>
<i>(Total USGS SIR Budget)</i>	<i>988</i>	<i>975</i>	<i>1,006</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>3.2%</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>1.9%</i>
Bureau of Reclamation	13	13	16	3	20.4%	3	20.4%
National Park Service	19	20	20	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
Bureau of Land Management	12	12	14	2	14.8%	2	14.8%
Minerals Management Service	26	29	29	0	-1.6%	3	9.8%
Total Interior R&D	634	621	661	41	6.5%	27	4.2%

AAAS estimates based on FY 2008 appropriations bills. Includes conduct of R&D and R&D facilities.

FY 2007 and FY 2008 request figures based on OMB R&D data and supplemental agency budget data.

FY 2008 Conf. figures are adjusted to reflect across-the-board cuts in the 2008 omnibus appropriations bill.

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

1/ The FY 2008 omnibus bill provides \$7 million in new funding for USGS climate change research.

December 17, 2007 - AAAS estimates of House-Senate Conference appropriations.

These appropriations may be rejected by the House or Senate, and may be vetoed by the President.