Senate Offers Modest Increase to USGS R&D

(This analysis is part of a series of AAAS R&D Funding Updates on the FY 2001 congressional appropriations process. This analysis includes information on R&D in Senate appropriations for Interior. The complete series of AAAS R&D Funding Updates, including continually updated analyses of R&D by agency in FY 2001 appropriations, is available on the AAAS R&D Web Site (http://www.aaas.org/spp/R&D) in the "FY 2001 R&D" or the "What's New" sections.)

On June 22, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its FY 2001 Interior appropriations bill, which provides funding for R&D in the Department of the Interior. The bill goes to the Senate floor shortly. The Senate bill would provide $571 million for Interior R&D, a slight drop of 0.3 percent or $2 million from FY 2000 because of restrictive spending targets for the overall bill (see Table). The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) requested a 7 percent increase for its R&D programs, but the Senate would allocate a smaller 3.7 percent increase to $520 million. The full House approved its version of the Interior bill on June 14. The House would provide considerably less for Interior R&D than the Senate ($549 million), including a cut in USGS R&D to $499 million, $21 million less than the Senate. (For details of House appropriations for Interior R&D, please see the June 2 AAAS R&D Funding Update.)

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is the primary sponsor of R&D in Interior. Its total Senate appropriation is $848 million, $47 million less than the request but $34 million or 4.2 percent above FY 2000 (see Table). The President's request singled out USGS as a high priority in the Interior budget and asked for a nearly 10 percent increase for the USGS budget and a 7.3 percent increase for its R&D, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of the USGS budget. USGS R&D would total $520 million in the Senate plan, 3.7 percent above FY 2000. While the Senate was unable to meet the full USGS request because the overall Interior bill falls nearly $1 billion below the President's request, the Senate would be more generous than the House, which would provide only $817 million for USGS, barely above FY 2000, and would cut USGS R&D.

The request proposed to boost the USGS budget especially in the areas of geographic and biological research, with a focus on improving USGS contributions to the science needs of Interior's land and resource management bureaus. The Senate appropriation should allow for these expanded efforts, though not on the scale envisioned by USGS. The national mapping R&D program would receive a substantial increase of $7 million to $30 million, mostly because of a proposed shift from non-R&D activities to R&D within a flat total mapping budget. R&D in the other USGS bureaus would also increase, though by smaller percentages.

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. USGS is also a leading sponsor of water resources research and biological research, both of which would increase slightly in the Senate bill and decline in the House bill. 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.

If the Senate funding levels for R&D are enacted, Interior's R&D would fall again in inflation-adjusted terms because the Senate increases for USGS would be offset by requested cuts in R&D in the Minerals Management Service. Interior's 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 beginning in

the mid-1990s. The FY 2001 House and Senate funding levels would be nearly a third below the peak FY 1994 funding level.

The Interior bill now moves to the Senate floor, but it is expected to draw a veto threat from President Clinton because it falls so far short of his proposed funding levels.

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Table. Department of the Interior
Senate Appropriations Committee Action on R&D in the FY 2001 Budget
(budget authority in millions of dollars)

				Action by Senate		
	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2001	**FY 2001**	Chg. from FY 2000	
	Estimate	Request	House	**Senate**	Amount	Percent
U.S. Geological Survey:						
Surveys, Investigations, and Research (SIR):						
National Mapping	23	38	29	**30**	7	31.0%
Geologic Resources	211	218	208	**215**	4	1.9%
Water Resources	131	132	125	**131**	0	0.3%
Biological Research	137	151	137	**144**	7	5.0%
Total USGS R&D	502	539	499	**520**	18	3.7%
(USGS Non-R&D SIR Acitivities)	*312*	*357*	*318*	***327***	*16*	*5.1%*
(Total USGS SIR Budget)	*813*	*895*	*817*	***848***	*34*	*4.2%*
Bureau of Reclamation *	5	6	6	**6**	1	20.0%
National Park Service	31	31	31	**31**	0	0.0%
Bureau of Land Management	3	3	3	**3**	0	0.0%
Minerals Management Service	32	11	11	**11**	-21	-65.6%
Total Interior R&D	573	590	549	**571**	-2	-0.3%

AAAS estimates based on FY 2001 appropriations bills. Includes conduct of R&D and R&D facilities.
FY 2000 and FY 2001 request figures based on OMB R&D data and supplemental agency budget data.
Figures are rounded to the nearest million. Changes calculated from unrounded figures.
* - Funded in the Energy/Water bill, which has not been drafted yet by the Senate.
FY 2001 Senate figure is the requested funding level.

June 27, 2000 - Senate Appropriations Committee-approved funding levels.
These appropriations may be amended or rejected on the Senate floor.
House figures are House-approved funding levels.