

House Proposes Small Boost for USGS R&D

AAAS R&D Funding Update on R&D in House FY 2006 Interior Appropriations

Highlights

- The House Appropriations Committee would provide a **small increase of 0.7 percent to R&D in the Department of the Interior for a total of \$619 million, in contrast to requested cut of nearly 6 percent** (see Table).
- **The House would reverse proposed cuts to R&D in the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and provide an increase of \$12 million or 2.3 percent to \$553 million.** The House would restore \$30 million in proposed cuts to the USGS mineral resources R&D program.
- R&D funding for Interior would fall or remain flat for the sixth year in a row under the House proposal.

USGS R&D in FY 2006 House Appropriations

On May 10, the House Appropriations Committee kicked off the FY 2006 appropriations process by debating and approving its version of the FY 2006 Interior and Environment appropriations bill, the first of 12 appropriations bills. The bill funds most of the Department of the Interior as well as the Smithsonian Institution, the Forest Service, and for the first time the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). **The House Interior/Environment bill would provide \$619 million for Interior R&D in FY 2006**, a slight increase of \$4 million or 0.7 percent above FY 2005 that would be a sharp contrast to a cut of 6 percent contained in the President's request (see Table).

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. 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, 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. Nearly 90 percent of this research is conducted within Interior labs to address the science needs of Interior's other agencies.

In the FY 2006 budget request released in February, the Bush Administration requested \$934 million for the USGS total budget in FY 2006, \$2 million or 0.2 percent less than this year (see Table). The House Appropriations Committee allowed itself roughly half a billion dollars more for the \$26 billion Interior and Environment portfolio than the request, and would use some of the extra dollars **to provide \$975 million for USGS in FY 2006, 4.1 percent or \$38 million more than this year's funding level** and a similar amount over the request.

R&D accounts for nearly two-thirds of the USGS budget, with the remainder going to non-R&D activities such as environmental data collection, mapping, and natural hazards reduction. **The House bill would allow \$553 million for USGS R&D in FY 2006, a small increase of 2.3 percent or \$12 million (see Table), in contrast to a proposed cut of 4.8 percent in the Administration request.** The budget requested particularly steep cuts in the USGS Geology Division, but the House would provide increases for the Geology, National Mapping, and Biological Research divisions and flat funding for the remaining Water Resources Division. (For details of the President's request for Interior R&D, please see Chapter 13 of *AAAS Report XXX: R&D FY 2006* or the March 2 Interior R&D Funding Update).

R&D in the Geologic Hazards, Resources, and Processes Division would increase \$5 million or 2.2 percent to \$210 million in the House plan, in a sharp turnaround from a requested cut of 13 percent. USGS proposed to cut the \$54 million mineral resources R&D program in half to \$25 million in FY 2006, in a repeat of similar requests in past years. But just as it has in the past two years, the House disagrees strongly with the proposal and would add back \$30 million in funding. Report language accompanying the bill disagrees strongly with USGS' rationale that minerals research could be funded by the private sector, and reaffirms the federal role in minerals research.

In another earth sciences-related division, Mapping and Geography R&D would increase 15 percent or \$5 million to \$41 million, but this would only restore funding to the 2004 level after a cut in 2005. The ups and downs in this division are in the land remote sensing programs, which operate satellites but also fund R&D on data retrieval, archiving, processing, and imaging.

In water resources R&D, the House would keep funding flat at \$126 million, in contrast to a requested cut. The House would reject the USGS proposal to eliminate the water resources research institutes program and would instead provide \$6.5 million, slightly above this year's funding level. Other water programs would be funded at or slightly below this year's levels. Funding for the **Toxic Substances Hydrology Program** would decline \$1 million to \$13.4 million. The program is a collaborative effort of USGS scientists, university and private-sector researchers, and state, local, and other federal agency scientists to conduct long-term research on water resource contamination in surface and groundwater environments. There would be a slight increase for the **National Water Quality Assessment Program (NAWQA)** to \$63 million to bring it back to last year's funding level. 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. Similarly, R&D in the **Cooperative Water Program** would stay even at last year's funding level of \$64 million after a cut in the 2005 budget. 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.

The House would provide a small boost to USGS biological research programs to \$175 million, up \$3 million from this year and \$2 million from the request because of the addition of congressionally earmarked projects.

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 project in the National Park Service. The House would go along with the President's request for these R&D programs.

Impacts of the FY 2006 Interior Budget

The modest House-proposed FY 2006 increase to Interior R&D would be the sixth year in a row that Interior R&D funding has just kept pace or lost ground to inflation (see Figure 1), and would leave the department nearly 25 percent below the funding levels of a decade ago. 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 losses after adjusting for inflation. The tight fiscal environment in which appropriators are operating for the FY 2006 appropriations process makes it extremely difficult for domestic programs to win an increase.

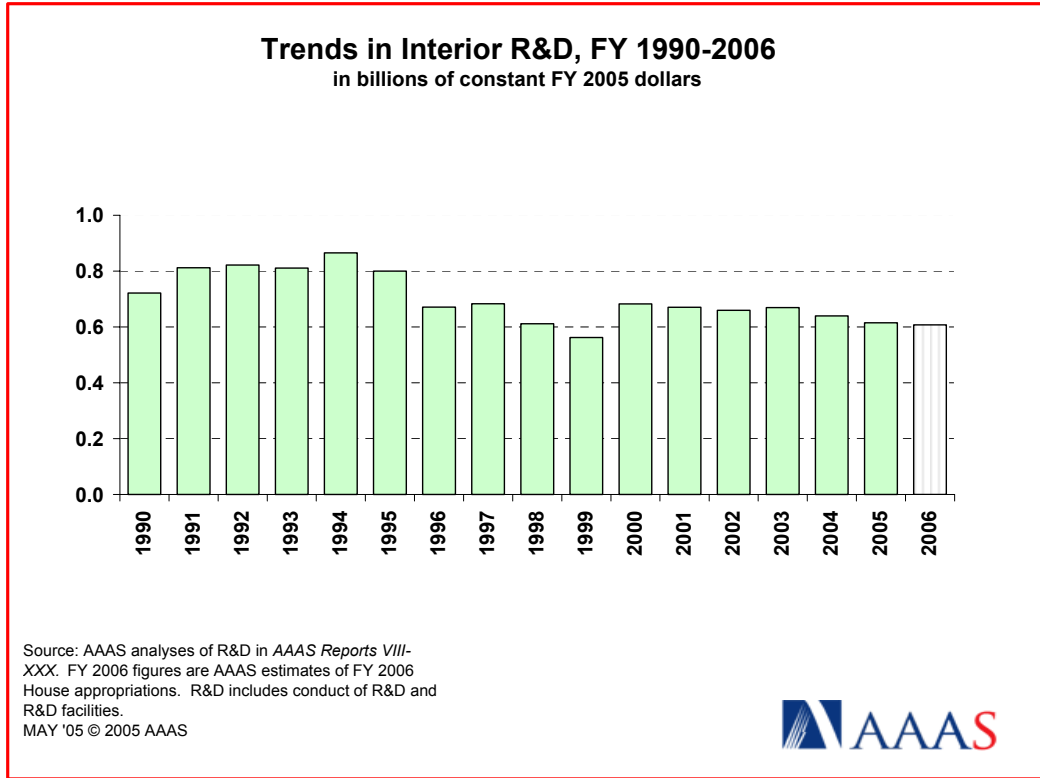


Figure 1. (click on the image for PDF)

The House Interior/Environment bill now goes to the full House for expected approval. After that, the Senate Appropriations Committee is expected to draft its version in June.

- May 12, 2005

(This analysis is one of a series of AAAS R&D Funding Updates on FY 2006 congressional appropriations. The complete series of AAAS R&D Funding Updates, including continually updated analyses of R&D in FY 2006 appropriations, is available on the AAAS R&D Web Site (<http://www.aaas.org/spp/rd>) in the “FY 2006 R&D” or the “What’s New” sections.)

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Table. Dept. of the Interior R&D in FY 2006 House Appropriations

**Table. Department of the Interior
House Appropriations Committee Action on R&D in the FY 2006 Budget
(budget authority in millions of dollars)**

	FY 2005 Estimate	FY 2006 Request	FY 2006 House	House Action		Chg. from FY 2005	
				Chg. from Request Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent
U.S. Geological Survey:							
Surveys, Investigations, and Research (SIR):							
National Mapping	36	43	41	-2	-5.5%	5	14.9%
Geologic Resources	206	179	210	31	17.6%	5	2.2%
Water Resources	126	119	126	7	5.8%	0	-0.2%
Biological Research	172	173	175	2	1.1%	3	1.6%
Enterprise Information 1/	2	1	1	0	17.8%	0	-9.7%
Total USGS R&D	541	515	553	38	7.4%	12	2.3%
<i>(USGS Non-R&D SIR Activities)</i>	<i>395</i>	<i>418</i>	<i>421</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>6.5%</i>
<i>(Total USGS SIR Budget)</i>	<i>936</i>	<i>934</i>	<i>975</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>4.4%</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>4.1%</i>
Bureau of Reclamation 2/	17	10	10	0	0.0%	-7	-41.2%
National Park Service	14	14	14	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Bureau of Land Management	12	14	14	0	0.0%	2	16.7%
Minerals Management Service	31	28	28	0	0.0%	-3	-9.7%
Total Interior R&D	615	581	619	38	6.5%	4	0.7%

AAAS estimates based on FY 2005 and FY 2006 appropriations bills. Includes conduct of R&D and R&D facilities.

FY 2005 and FY 2006 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.

1/ Transfers of IT-related programs from other accounts beginning in FY 2005.

2/ Funded in the Energy-Water bill, which has not yet been drafted by the House. FY 2006 figures are the President's request.

**May 12, 2005 - AAAS estimates of House Appropriations Committee-approved bills.
These figures may be amended or rejected by the full House.**