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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Opening Statement of
The Honorable Doug Lamborn
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources

Oversight Hearing to

"Examine the Spending Priorities and the Missions of the U.S. Geological Survey and the President's FY 2012 Budget Proposal"

March 9, 2011

We are here today to consider the President's proposed fiscal year 2012 budget and missions for the U.S. Geological Survey.

The Survey was founded on March 3, 1879 for the purpose of classifying public lands and to examine geologic structures, mineral resources, and products within and outside the national domain.

Today the USGS mission reads a little like The Book of Genesis but not quite in the order of the earth's creation. It includes the land and waters; it gives us an understanding of the minerals and energy resources of our world. Helps us track the subsurface movements of the earth in order to mitigate the adverse impacts of earth quakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and other geologic hazards.

During the 90's that mission was further expanded to include the national biological service to study the plants that cover the earth and the birds and animals that roam the earth. Over the last few years, the mission of USGS has expanded further to include work on climate change and the budget before us today continues this expansion by finalizing a move to include more responsibility for operations in space and ecosystem restoration here on earth.

Considering the USGS now has responsibility for the entire world: the rocks, waters, animals, air, and space I must say madam Director, it sounds like an incredibly daunting job.

It is also deeply troubling for those of us who care about the traditional missions of the Survey to see its missions and budgetary requirements redirected to programs that other than the important economic activities built on the USGS Organic act and the various mineral policy laws that Congress has passed over the years.

We will be reminded today that the important mission of the Survey to combat and address geologic hazards is slated for a reduction in funding. As we were reminded just over a year ago in Haiti, earthquakes can and do kill hundreds of thousands of people, in the case of Haiti a

magnitude 7 earthquake killed over 230,000 people. We were also reminded of the importance of mitigation as an equally devastating magnitude 8 earthquake in Chile killed approximately 500 people. Many folks are deeply concerned that the Administration's proposal to reduce funding for the geologic hazards program will hinder the Nation's ability to prepare and mitigate for potential natural disasters. More troubling is the proposed budget includes significant spending increases for well-intended but questionable scientific endeavors with no measurable benefit to society.

In addition, as the Survey is stretched thinner, the traditional core responsibilities such as mapping, geologic mapping and ensuring "adequate, stable, and economical materials supplies essential to national security, economic well-being, and industrial production;" are displaced with fashionable programs with limited if any measurable benefit to society.

As we see the Survey gaining greater responsibility for the Landsat satellites that help us understand our earth, we also see the Survey failing to help keep duplication of mapping efforts from wasting our precious tax dollars. This is an area that I am particularly concerned about; in 2009 this Subcommittee heard testimony identifying billions of dollars wasted in the stimulus bill on duplicative mapping efforts. I expect today we will hear that such duplication and waste continue in our federal agencies. It is the mission of this Subcommittee to find opportunities to root out waste, duplication and streamline government. You can be assured this committee will be examining this issue in more depth in the future.

Finally, I'm wondering where the "geology" is at the United States Geological Survey. It's been completely swallowed up by all the 'new missions and reorganization' at USGS. If I was to guess the name of your agency by looking at your budget it would be called the United States Ecosystem Restoration and Climate Monitoring Service not the United States Geological Survey.

It's time that the survey get back to its roots providing the foundational knowledge of the nation's geology, energy and mineral resources, geologic structure and hazards, and a functional map base for the United States; knowledge that allows states, local governments, tribal nations, territories and the private sector to make informed decisions regarding economic development, private sector investment, conservation and job creation.

Baseline geologic information allows the United States to make informed decisions on how to best reduce our dependence on foreign sources of fuel and non-fuel mineral resources improving our economic and national security.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today.