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Testimony on hearing to
“Examine the Spending Priorities and the Missions of the U.S. Geological Survey
and the President’s FY 2012 Budget Proposal.”
Before the
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
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Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present our views on the priorities, mission and budget proposal for the U.S. Geological Survey. MAPPS (www.mapps.org) is a national association of private sector geospatial firms. Our 180+ member firms span the entire spectrum of the geospatial community, including satellite and airborne remote sensing, surveying, photogrammetry, aerial photography, LIDAR, hydrography, bathymetry, charting, aerial and satellite image processing, GPS, and GIS data collection and conversion services and companies that provide hardware, software, products and services to the geospatial profession in the United States and other firms from around the world. A significant number of our member firms are prime contractors or subcontractors to USGS and other federal agencies, and to the state and local governments that receive grant monies from USGS.

MAPPS believes there is a critical need to refocus the mission and priorities of the USGS, and to align its budget with this new direction. The USGS operates primarily under authorization provided by the Act of March 3, 1879 (codified in 43 U.S.C. 31 et seq.). It has been decades since Congress last enacted major legislation affecting one of the original and core missions of the USGS – the surveying and mapping of the United States. As a result, surveying and mapping has proliferated among more than 40 federal agencies, resulting in duplication, a lack of coordination, gaps in coverage and the absence of a strategic approach to providing the basic geographic information needed in the 21st century for scientific research, as well as practical applications that contribute to the economic health, quality of life and safety and security of our Nation. The need for better coordination of Federal surveying and mapping activities has been well documented by previous Congressional hearings, including one by this Subcommittee in 2009, GAO reports, National Academy of Sciences studies, and investigations by the National Academy of Public Administration, OMB and other entities.

The National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI), established by President Clinton in Executive Order 12906 on April 11, 1994, and amended and reaffirmed by President Bush in Executive Order 13286 on March 5, 2003, provides a framework for the geographic information America needs today. However, this priority is not reflected in the USGS budget.

The National Map is the key USGS component of the NSDI. We are surprised and deeply disappointed that funding for this activity, and the partnerships to facilitate this activity, is proposed to be cut in the President’s FY 2012 budget. I call to your attention the extraordinarily candid comment on page E-15 of the USGS “Green Book” FY 2012 Budget Justification:

The National Map Partnerships (-\$3,500,000/-4 FTE)

The USGS proposes to reduce the funding for the Partnership Implementation component of the National Map by \$3.5 million which is currently funded at \$13.9 million. The proposed reduction eliminates all funds used to specifically leverage with Federal, State and local agencies to acquire new data.

The proposed decrease would eliminate liaison positions responsible for partnerships in 13 States. These positions organize the agreements through which the USGS leverages its resources with those of State and local cooperators. They routinely provide coordination among Federal geospatial resources and those of State and local governments. Beyond these immediate outcomes, the reduction would result in reduced work for America's geospatial industry, which benefits by fulfilling contracts for projects that result from agreements the NGP makes with its cooperators.

Mr. Chairman, this is the last place we should be cutting the USGS budget. A reduction in partnerships will result in more duplication, less coordination, less leveraging of scarce resources, and increased unemployment in the private sector. It goes exactly in the opposite direction of what this Subcommittee, on a bipartisan basis, concluded was necessary in its 2009 hearing and the recommendations of numerous studies, including the National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences report *National Spatial Data Infrastructure Partnership Programs* (2001). According to the USGS's own analysis, for every \$1 in funds appropriated to USGS for NSDI framework data, more than \$11 in partnership dollars is leveraged. That is a return on investment that will be lost as partnerships are reduced. This is a penny wise and pound foolish reduction.

Moreover, the FY 2012 budget request decreases funding for the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) by \$200,000. Last week, the GAO issued a report, *Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue*. While this report did not discuss duplication in Federal geospatial activities, previous studies have done so. GAO qualified its report by noting it did not provide an exhaustive or comprehensive list of Federal activities prone to duplication, but if it had, geospatial would be near the top of such a list. This point was also identified by this Subcommittee in its 2009 hearing, as well as in hearings in 2003 and 2004 by a Subcommittee of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the 2004 GAO report, *Geospatial Information: Better Coordination Needed to Identify and Reduce Duplicative Investments*.

Mr. Chairman, I regret to report that since the Subcommittee held its hearing in July of 2009, the Steering Committee of the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) has not met. In fact, the FGDC Steering Committee, chaired by Secretary Salazar, has not met since the Obama Administration took office in January of 2009. The last meeting of the designated senior career or political officials of the government was in the final days of the Bush Administration. It is an unfortunate neglect of leadership and responsibility. We urge the Subcommittee to reinforce the need for coordination, partnerships, and a clear definition of roles and responsibilities so that tax dollars are not wasted, effort is not duplicated, and our economy is not stifled.

Perhaps the most troubling trend in USGS has been its retrenchment from utilization of the private sector. In FY10, the appropriated amount from Congress for USGS National Geospatial Program was \$70 million. However, only \$5 million of the \$70 million went to contract via the Geospatial Products and Services Contracts (GPSC). That is only 7% going to contract for data and related services. This is a reversal of a direction from Congress that USGS had previously implemented. In House Report 104-173, to accompany H.R. 1977 Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996, the Appropriations Committee instructed:

“The Committee expects the Survey to continue to increase its contracting of map and digital data production, with the goal of no less than 50 percent contracting by the end of fiscal year 1997 and no less than 60 percent contracting by the end of fiscal year 1999. The survey should not be competing with the private sector for map production contracts. When services of equal quality and cost are available from the private sector, the Survey should use the private sector.”

Another USGS activity that has long upset MAPPs members is the Civil Applications Committee (CAC) (p I-36). The CAC is an interagency committee, chaired by USGS, and housed in a secure facility at the USGS headquarters in Reston, VA, that facilitates civil agency use of classified imagery and other data, officially known as National Technical Means (NTM) for “resource management, environmental, climate, natural disaster, and remote sensing applications.” This secret activity often duplicates and competes with the private sector. While the policy prescribes that NTM data is only to be used when commercially provided data does not exist, we have seen examples where the policy has not been followed, and the private sector has not been utilized. Also, there is no transparency to this activity and the private sector is often unaware of the CAC’s facilitation of the use of NTM when commercial solutions were indeed available. It should be noted that a number of MAPPs member firms work in GEOINT, or geospatial intelligence and have the cleared personnel and secure facilities to support classified data. We urge the Subcommittee’s oversight of the CAC, a reduction in its funding, and stronger enforcement of policies and procedures to prevent government competition with and duplication of the private sector.

On the bright side, we are pleased the budget request includes an increase, or reallocation, of \$48 million to support the current and future mission of the National Land Imaging Program, principally through LANDSAT. The National Land Imaging Program includes funding for current satellites (LANDSAT 5 and 7), the LANDSAT Data Continuity Mission (LANDSAT 8), scheduled to launch in December 2012, and the development of LANDSAT 9 and 10, through a continuous program to ensure data continuity in the future. The moderate resolution data provided by LANDSAT does not compete with the private sector and is an appropriate government investment. It provides for data that is primarily used in research and scientific applications, much of it funded by the government, which compliments higher resolution satellite and airborne capabilities available from the private sector. This funding by the Obama Administration continues implementation of the “Future of Land Imaging” program initiated in the Bush Administration. We support this bipartisan program.

Mr. Chairman, geospatial data, products, technology and services enhance and contribute to national priorities in economic development, resource management, environmental protection, infrastructure, construction and maintenance, homeland security and a variety of other national needs and applications. The USGS was once the envy of the world for its leadership in this field. I have pleaded with previous USGS leaders to “lead, follow or get out of the way”. In the Committee’s Oversight Plan for the 112th Congress, this Subcommittee reported:

Federal Mapping Programs - The federal government spends billions each year on new geospatial data – spending which is frequently duplicative and uncoordinated. During hearings last year, witnesses made clear that multiple Administrations have exerted little control, central oversight or effective management. The Subcommittee intends to examine this issue and may consider legislation to consolidate and streamline the geospatial programs to reduce waste and duplication. In addition, the Subcommittee intends to conduct oversight of federal agencies and how they track and monitor their land management responsibilities and purposes.

We look forward to working with the Subcommittee on this important and long-overdue review and reform of USGS’s mapping and geospatial activities. It is time to bring USGS into the 21st Century and align its programs and budget priorities to America’s contemporary and future needs to provide the spatial data infrastructure necessary for economic growth, sound resource management, solid science, and proper environmental stewardship.

USGS should be focused on coordination; assisting with applying geospatial data to our Nation’s challenges; encouraging economic development, private sector job creation and export promotion; driving a research agenda that is responsive to the private sector’s needs; working to assure a geospatial workforce that will meet the demands of the nation; and contracting with the private sector and partnering with other government entities to build and then maintain the NSDI. We believe this is where USGS’s budget priorities should be placed and we are committed to working with you and the Administration to build a stronger USGS that once again lead’s the Federal government’s geographic information activities.