

Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources

Paul Gosar, Chairman
Hearing Memorandum

November 27, 2017

To: All Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources Members

From: Majority Committee Staff -- Joshua Hoffman (x5-9297)
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources

Hearing: **Legislative hearing on H.R. 1675 (Rep. Suzan DelBene, D-WA-01), To establish a national program to identify and reduce losses from landslide hazards, to establish a national 3D Elevation Program, and for other purposes. November 30, 2017; 2:30 PM, 1334 Longworth House Office Building**

H.R. 1675 (Rep. Suzan DelBene), “National Landslide Preparedness Act”

Summary of the Bill

This bill directs the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to establish a National Landslide Hazards Reduction Program to identify and understand landslide hazards and risks, reduce losses from landslides, protect communities at risk of landslide hazards, help improve communication and emergency preparedness, and establishes the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Landslide Hazards to oversee the program.

Invited Witnesses

Dr. David Applegate
Deputy Director (Acting)
Office of the Director / Natural Hazards
United States Geological Survey
Reston, VA

Ms. Allyson K. Anderson Book
Executive Director
American Geosciences Institute
Alexandria, VA

Mr. Scott Nichols
Permitting and Lands Manager
U.S. Geothermal Inc.
Boise, ID

Mr. Steve Masterman
Alaska State Geologist
(On Behalf of the Association of American State Geologists)
Fairbanks, AK

Cosponsors: Rep. Bonamici, Suzanne [D-OR-1], Rep. Cartwright, Matt [D-PA-17], Rep. Grijalva, Raul M. [D-AZ-3], Rep. Heck, Denny [D-WA-10], Rep. Kilmer, Derek [D-WA-6], Rep. Lee, Barbara [D-CA-13], Rep. Norton, Eleanor Holmes [D-DC-At Large], Rep. Polis, Jared [D-CO-2], Rep. Smith, Adam [D-WA-9], Rep. Tipton, Scott R. [R-CO-3]

Background

Landslides are geologic hazards that exist in all 50 states and the U.S. territories. USGS estimates that landslides account for \$1 billion to \$2 billion in damages and, on average, 25 fatalities every year.¹ As expansion of urban and recreational development occurs more and more people are exposed to potential impacts from landslide hazards. Landslides are often triggered by other events like heavy storms, earthquakes, volcanic activities, and wildfires.

A core mission of the USGS is the Landslides Hazards Program (LHP) which has existed since the 1970's. Its purpose is to provide scientific information to minimize loss of life and property from landslides.² The LHP conducts landslide hazard assessments, conducts landslide investigations and forecasts, and provides assistance in response to landslide events. The LHP partners with states, other Department of the Interior bureaus, and other Federal agencies in these activities. Local public decision makers depend on the LHP for information before, during, and after landslide triggering disasters to better inform their actions. Since FY2014 the LHP has been funded at \$3.5 million annually.³

H.R. 1675 directs the Secretary of the Interior to bolster the LHP's activities by creating a National Landslide Hazards Reduction Program to identify and understand risks and reduce losses from landslide hazards, and to help improve communication and emergency preparedness.

It also establishes a national 3D Elevation Program (3DEP) to update and produce standard, publicly accessible 3D elevation data for the United States, in coordination with other federal agencies and nonfederal entities. 3DEP would have value not only for assessing landslide hazards but for also identifying energy, mineral and water resources, geologic and environmental hazards such as active faults and seismic areas, unstable ground subject to landslides, swelling soils, floodplains and abandoned mine lands.

The bill establishes two committees to oversee and coordinate the activities of the National Landslide Hazards Reduction Program and the 3DEP Program. These committees are the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Landslide Hazards, and the 3D Elevation Federal Interagency Coordinating Committee respectively.

Section-by-Section Analysis of H.R. 1675

Section 1 - Short Title

Section 2 – Definitions

¹ U.S. Geological Survey's Landslides Hazards Program, <https://landslides.usgs.gov/aboutus/>

² Id.

³ U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Budget, <https://www.doi.gov/budget/appropriations/>

Section 3 – National Landslide Hazards Reduction Program

Section 3 directs the Secretary of the Interior to establish the National Landslide Hazards Reduction Program. This program will:

- Develop and publish a national strategy for landslide hazards and risk reduction in the United States.
- Develop and maintain a publicly accessible national landslide hazard and risk inventory database.
- Disseminate landslide planning and risk reduction materials.
- Expand the early warning system for flash floods and debris flow.
- Establish emergency response procedures for the rapid deployment of federal scientists, equipment, and services to areas impacted by a significant landslide event.
- Support emergency response efforts and improve the safety of emergency responders
- Establish the Advisory Committee on Landslides.
- Advance the identification, mapping, research, and monitoring of subsidence and groundwater resource accounting.

The Secretary may provide competitive grants to state, local, and tribal governments to research, map, assess, and collect data on landslide hazards.

The National Science Foundation shall ensure that landslide research grants are provided on a competitive basis to advance the goals and priorities of the national strategy.

Section 4 – Ground Subsidence

This section allows the secretary to support the identification, mapping, research, and monitoring of subsidence and groundwater resource accounting.

Section 5 – 3D Elevation Program

This section directs the Secretary of the Interior to establish a 3D Elevation Program and the 3D Elevation Federal Interagency Coordinating Committee. This program will:

- Provide 3D elevation data coverage for the United States.
- Coordinate and facilitate the collection, dissemination, and use of 3D elevation data among federal agencies and non-federal entities.
- Produce standard, publicly accessible 3D elevation data products for the United States.
- Promote the collection, dissemination, and use of 3D elevation data among federal, state, local, and tribal governments, communities, institutions of higher education, and the private sector.

The USGS may make grants and enter into cooperative agreements to facilitate the improvement of nationwide coverage of 3D elevation data.

Cost

Unknown at this time. H.R.1675 does not make any authorizations for programs and activities outlined in the bill.

Administration Position

Unknown at this time.

Effect on Current Law

None