

## Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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**Series:** Organization

**Part 120:** U.S. Geological Survey

**Chapter 1:** Creation, Authority, Mission and Functions

**Originating Office:** U.S. Geological Survey

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### 120 DM 1

1.1 **Creation.** The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) was established by the Organic Act of March 3, 1879 (20 Stat. 394; 43 U.S.C. 31), which provided for “the classification of the public lands and examination of the geological structure, mineral resources, and products of the national domain.” The Act of September 5, 1962 (76 Stat. 427; 43 U.S.C. 31 (b)), expanded this authorization to include such examinations outside the national domain. Topographic mapping and chemical and physical research were recognized as an essential part of the investigations and studies authorized by the Organic Act, and specific provision was made for them by Congress in the Act of October 2, 1888 (25 Stat. 505, 526).

#### 1.2 Authorities.

A. Following the early work on classification of land available for irrigation, provision was made in 1894 for gauging the streams and determining the water supply of the United States (28 Stat. 398). Authorizations for publication, sale, and distribution of material prepared by the USGS are contained in several statutes (43 U.S.C. 41-45; 44 U.S.C. 1318, 1320).

B. As a result of Congressional action in 1996 (P.L. 104-134, 110 Stat. 1321), the USGS incorporated the biological research functions of the former National Biological Service and the minerals information formerly conducted by the Bureau of Mines.

C. The authority of the Director as delegated by the Secretary of the Interior is set forth in Part 220 of the Departmental Manual.

1.2 **Mission.** The USGS mission is to serve the Nation by providing reliable scientific information to describe and understand the Earth; minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters; manage water, biological, energy and mineral resources; and enhance and protect our quality of life. The USGS combines and enhances its diverse programs, capabilities and talents to provide science leadership and contribute to the resolution of complex issues.

09/30/2011 #3913

Replaces 05/19/2000 #3304

**1.3 Functions.** To accomplish its mission, the USGS undertakes long-term data collection and monitoring; conducts research, development, and assessments; and develops tools and applications. Hazards and Environment and Natural Resources are the two major activities:

A. Hazards. The USGS provides information needed by the public before, during, and after natural disasters to minimize the loss of life and property. Hazards include earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, geomagnetic (solar) storms, floods, coastal erosion, tsunamis, wildland fire, and wildlife disease. The USGS describes, documents, and increases understanding of natural hazards and their risks. Specific activities include:

- (1) Accurate, scientifically based assessments that define the nature and degree of hazard risks;
- (2) Basic and applied research to enhance understanding of hazards and their causes and effects;
- (3) Operation of long-term monitoring of natural hazard networks;
- (4) Short-term prediction/forecasting of hazard events;
- (5) Monitoring of events to provide real-time information;
- (6) Communication with emergency managers, public safety officials, and others during hazard events;
- (7) Post-crisis analysis with scenario formulation to develop strategies to mitigate the impact of future events and preparation of coordinated risk assessments for regions vulnerable to natural hazards; and
- (8) Synthesis, integration, and rapid distribution of natural hazards information and data.

B. Environment and Natural Resources. The USGS provides long-term environmental and natural resources information, systematic analyses and investigations, and predictive tools for scenario building and decision making about natural systems. Science is conducted in response to current and anticipated needs to improve understanding of environmental and natural resource (air, land, water, plant, and animal life) issues on local, national, and global scales. Studies encompass data collection, long-term assessments, ecosystem analysis, monitoring change, and forecasting the changes that may be expected in the future. Specific activities include:

- (1) Providing the scientific information and tools to support the land and resource management mission of the Department of the Interior;

09/30/2011 #3913

Replaces 05/19/2000 #3304

- (2) Providing information to resource managers on the current status of environmental resources and predicting potential ecosystem response to management actions;
- (3) Assessments of the availability and quality of the Nation's resources, including mineral, energy, surface-water and groundwater resources, and evaluating the economic and environmental effects of extraction, management, and use;
- (4) Conducting research to enhance understanding Earth systems, including geologic systems and processes, to enable effective and efficient resource and environmental management decisions;
- (5) Assisting public officials and the private sector in developing, evaluating, and implementing cost-effective strategies and tools for sustaining and restoring the environment;
- (6) Determining the status and trends of the Nation's biological resources and evaluating threats to these resources;
- (7) Helping water resource managers and public officials develop, evaluate, and implement improved, cost-effective, and balanced water resources management;
- (8) Providing data and information interfaces, tools, and architectures that enable diverse users to find, get, and use natural science information in ways that are meaningful to them;
- (9) Providing national map and geospatial coverage for use in research and management decisions;
- (10) Acquiring, managing, and using land resources observation technology and satellite data;
- (11) Conducting research to advance understanding of geography, cartography, and geospatial information science;
- (12) Conducting long-term collection, management, archiving, and access of current and historical natural science data;
- (13) Assessing water resources and developing an understanding of the impact of human activities and natural phenomena on hydrologic systems; and
- (14) Conducting investigations of biological resources, including biology of critical species, ecology of habitat, ecosystems, and landscapes.