

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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Part 305: Departmental Science Efforts

Chapter 4: Strategic Sciences Group

Originating Office: Office of Policy Analysis

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4.1 Purpose. This chapter provides policy guidance and describes responsibilities for the Department's Strategic Sciences Group.

4.2 Scope. The policy in this chapter applies to the Strategic Sciences Group and its collaborative efforts among the Department's bureaus and offices

4.3 Policy. The Department has significant responsibilities to protect people and resources and engage in emergency response, recovery, and restoration efforts. Specifically, but not exclusively during crisis situations, it is the policy of the Department that bureaus and offices will fully integrate and effectively use science-based assessments in land and resource regulatory and management policies, practices, and decisions.

4.4 Strategic Sciences Group (SSG). The SSG provides the Department with science-based assessments and interdisciplinary scenarios of environmental crises affecting Departmental resources. The SSG is headed by two Co-Leaders: one from the US Geological Survey and one from another bureau. The Co-Leaders are appointed by the Secretary or his/her designee and provide advice to the Science Advisor and the Secretary with respect to their responsibilities as outlined in this chapter. The Co-Leaders are responsible for organizing the SSG, developing necessary operating procedures and methods, and leading the SSG activities in support of its mission. The SSG coordinates with other Federal agencies and the scientific community. Responsibilities of the SSG include:

- A. Maintaining an operational plan.
- B. Activating an Operational Group during environmental crises of national significance affecting DOI resources when directed by the Secretary in writing.
- C. Leading, assembling, and training the Operational Group to build interdisciplinary scenarios when the SSG is deployed including scientists and other experts from government, academic institutions, non-government organizations, and the private sector, as appropriate.

D. Providing results of the SSG's work to the Secretary and Departmental leadership as necessary and when requested to support decision making during crises.

E. Assisting other Federal, state, local, and tribal agencies, and providing international assistance as necessary when directed by the Secretary, subject to applicable authorities and availability of appropriations.

F. Developing science-based assessments and interdisciplinary scenarios of environmental crises, identifying impacts and possible interventions to reduce such impacts, and making necessary preparations for activating Operational Groups during non-crisis times.

4.5 Strategic Sciences Council. The Strategic Sciences Council includes representatives from each bureau, the Office of Emergency Management, the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance, and the Office of Policy Analysis. At a minimum, it meets at least twice per year. The Strategic Sciences Council is responsible for:

- A. Providing advice to the Co-Leaders of the SSG.
- B. Supporting coordination among the bureaus.
- C. Providing advice on key issues and questions to be addressed by the SSG, and
- D. Communicating the activities and results of the SSG to bureaus and offices.