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The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS): FY2026 Appropriations

Background

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in the Department of the Interior (DOI) provides scientific information to support the management of water, energy, mineral, biological, and land resources and to help communities prepare for natural hazards. The USGS also collects long-term data to understand and report on the Earth's geologic and ecosystem processes, using satellite imagery, mapping, and ground-based instruments. The USGS is not a regulatory agency and does not manage federal lands.

Congress created the USGS in 1879 in the USGS Organic Act (43 U.S.C. §31). The USGS Organic Act defined the initial scope of the USGS:

> [The Director of the USGS] shall have the direction of the United States Geological Survey, and the classification of the public lands and examination of the geological structure, mineral resources, and products of the national domain.

Since then, Congress has expanded the USGS's statutory authority to "such examinations outside the national domain where determined by the Secretary [of the Interior] to be in the national interest." Under this authority and additional congressional direction, the USGS now also conducts activities related to water resources, ecosystems, and natural hazards. The USGS conducts scientific activities under interdisciplinary mission areas, and each mission area has its own budget line (**Table 1**). The USGS also has budget lines for Science Support (administrative activities and information) and Facilities. Congress typically appropriates funds for the USGS under its Surveys, Investigations, and Research Account in annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations acts.

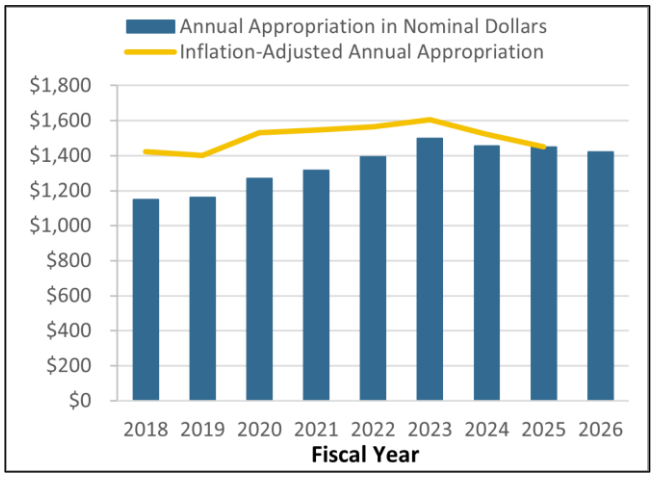
FY2026 Appropriations

P.L. 119-74 appropriated $1.420 billion to the USGS for FY2026 under Division C (**Figure 1**). This FY2026 annual appropriation was $528.9 million above President Trump's FY2026 budget request of $891.6 million and $29.8 million below the regular FY2025 enacted level of $1.450 billion.

As described in the accompanying explanatory statement, P.L. 119-74 generally funded USGS activities that the budget request proposed to cut. For example, the President requested eliminating funding for the Ecosystems Mission Area, but P.L. 119-74 funded the mission area (**Table 1**). The budget request also proposed creating a new mission area—Geology, Energy, and Minerals—by merging some geologic data and mapping activities (portions of the Core Science Systems Mission Area) and offshore energy and minerals activities with traditional energy and mineral resources program activities. Instead, P.L. 119-74 funded these activities under the existing mission area and program structure.

Figure 1. USGS Enacted Annual Appropriations, FY2018-FY2026

($ in millions)



Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS), based on enacted appropriations laws.

Notes: Inflation-adjusted amounts in FY2025 dollars using U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Table 3.9.4. Price Indexes for Government Consumption Expenditures and Gross Investment."

Table 1. USGS Funding: FY2025 and FY2026 Enacted Annual Appropriations and FY2026 Budget Request

(nominal $, in millions)

Mission Area or Budget Line	FY2025 Enacted	FY2026 Request	FY2026 Enacted
Ecosystems	299.4	—	294.7
Energy and Mineral Resources	101.1	137.1	104.7
Natural Hazards	198.6	136.5	200.1
Water Resources	288.8	223.8	288.8
Special Initiatives	—	—	2.3
Core Science Systems	273.2	165.0	276.1
Science Support	105.0	80.0	73.7
Facilities	184.1	149.1	180.1
Total	**1,450.2**	**891.6**	**1,420.4**

Sources: Explanatory statement for P.L. 119-74, Division C.

Note: The table presents FY2026 request funding under the current mission area structure and does not reflect the funding for the reorganized mission area structure proposed in the FY2026 President's budget request. Table figures may not add to totals shown due to rounding.

Mission Area and Budget Line Funding

The following sections further describe the FY2025 enacted appropriations, FY2026 budget request, and FY2026 enacted appropriations for selected activities under mission areas and budget lines, as described by the explanatory statement. Also, Congress included three congressionally directed spending items for the USGS, totaling $2.3 million, under "Special Initiatives."

Ecosystems Mission Area. The Ecosystems Mission Area conducts biological and ecological science to inform natural resource management decisions through its five programs and its Climate Adaptation Science Centers (CASCs) and cooperative research units (CRUs). Science activities conducted under the mission area include research related to invasive species, wildlife management, ecosystem restoration, land use, climate adaptation, and environmental contaminants, among others. The President requested eliminating funding for the mission area, except for invasive carp activities to be conducted in the Water Resources Mission Area. Instead, P.L. 119-74 provided $294.7 million for the mission area, $4.7 million less than in FY2025. The explanatory statement specified that some programs and CASCs are to receive increased funding compared with FY2025 levels; others are to receive decreased funding, and CRUs are to receive level funding.

Energy and Mineral Resources Mission Area. The budget request proposed creation of a new mission area: Geology, Energy, and Minerals. The request stated that the proposed mission area would support several executive orders, including Executive Orders 14154 and 14241, "Unleashing American Energy" and "Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production," respectively. Instead, P.L. 119-74 continued to fund scientific research and assessments for energy and minerals and analysis and forecasts of critical mineral supply chains under the existing Energy and Mineral Resources Mission Area. The explanatory statement stipulated funding the Mineral Resources program at the same level as FY2025 annual appropriations. The law increased funding for the Energy Resources program by $3.6 million, and the explanatory statement specified that $10.0 million of the program's funding be set aside for certain geothermal activities.

Natural Hazards Mission Area

The Natural Hazards Mission Area provides scientific information to help communities prepare for natural hazards, such as earthquakes, landslides, volcanoes, and coastal hazards. The budget request sought to reduce appropriations for the mission area by 31% compared with FY2025; however, the FY2026 explanatory statement directed $200.1 million for the mission area, an increase of $1.5 million over FY2025. Some hazards programs received the same appropriations as FY2025, although others received reduced or additional funding. For instance, funding for Coastal and Marine Hazards and Resources program was reduced by $0.9 million compared with FY2025. The Earthquake Hazards program increased by $2.3 million compared with FY2025, and the explanatory statement specified that $34.9 million of the program's funding was for continued development and expansion of the ShakeAlert earthquake early warning system in the West Coast.

Water Resources Mission Area

The Water Resources Mission Area monitors water resources and researches water processes. The FY2026 budget request proposed a 22% reduction for the mission area compared with FY2025. The explanatory statement directed that funding for the mission area remain at $288.8 million, with $66.5 million for Cooperative Matching Funds, which support cost-shared activities across the mission area. Funding for the National Water Quality Program decreased compared with FY2025. Funding increased for the Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program, with portions of the funding for Federal Priority Streamgages ($31.0 million) and Next Generation Water Observing Systems ($30.0 million). The Water Resources Research Act Program, a federal-state partnership that conducts water research, also received increased funding, although the President proposed not to fund the program.

Core Science Systems Mission Area The Core Science Systems mission area generally focuses on mapping activities and supports science across agency activities. The budget request proposed a 40% decrease from FY2025 funding of $273.2 million; however, the explanatory statement directed an increase of $2.9 million for the mission area. The National Land Imaging Program and National Geospatial Program received increased funding compared to FY2025, with level funding for the remaining programs. Within National Land Imaging, Landsat satellite operations received level funding ($95.3 million). The explanatory statement reiterated language in S.Rept. 119-46, which directed NASA and the USGS to maintain the current superspectral three-satellite constellation architecture for Landsat Next, with a launch target by 2031. The budget request had directed the agencies "to identify a more affordable architecture for the next Landsat mission."

Science Support and Facilities. The Science Support budget line includes funding to provide business services and information technology management to operate USGS programs. The explanatory statement included a reduction of $31.3 million for the budget line compared to FY2025 funding of $105.0 million. The reduction was mostly under Administration and Management. The budget request noted recent consolidation of roles under the activity. The Facilities budget line includes funding for rent, facility operations and maintenance, and deferred maintenance and repair. The explanatory statement directed $180.1 million to the budget line, a reduction of $4.0 million from FY2025.

Supplemental Appropriations for FY2026

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58) provided the USGS with supplemental appropriations of $510.7 million, of which $64.0 million were first made available in FY2026. This FY2026 funding was for the Earth Mapping Resources Initiative (Earth MRI), first funded with FY2019 annual appropriations. DOI stated that as of early 2025, regular and supplemental appropriations have supported Earth MRI, in partnership with 40 states, to "more than triple coverage of high-resolution data" that can support assessments of critical mineral resources.

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