

USGS to Focus on Land Observation and Ecosystems

The US President's proposed USD1.1 billion budget for the U.S. Geological Survey in 2012 emphasises cost-containment and program savings while investing in research and development programmes to restore and protect the nation's lands and waters for future generations. The budget for national land imaging increases by USD48 million, coastal and marine spatial planning sees an increase of USD4.5 million.

Marcia McNutt, USGS Director says that by providing funds for the sustained operation of Earth-observing satellites and for scientific research to enable understanding of complex ecosystems, the USGS budget will help the nation meet its energy needs, protect its land, water and wildlife, and make wise decisions about natural resources.

The 2012 budget represents an increase of USD6.1 million from the 2010 enacted level, which includes net program increases of USD28.8 million, administrative cost savings of USD23.4 million, and fixed costs and related change increases of USD710,000.

A new account is proposed for Landsat missions. Landsat furthers the Department of the Interior's role in land and remote sensing under the President's National Space Policy and provides invaluable data for land use and climate change research. The new account will include funding for current satellites (Landsats 5 and 7); the Landsat Data Continuity Mission (Landsat 8), which is scheduled to launch in December 2012; and the development of Landsats 9 and 10, through a continuous Landsat programme that will ensure data continuity in the future.

"There is no commercial replacement for the breadth and depth of data collected by Landsat satellites, which are then used in a multitude of ways by the agricultural, water management, disaster response, and scientific communities," said Director McNutt. "Because Landsat enables us to see Earth's surface so clearly, so broadly, so objectively, we gain invaluable insights about the complexity of Earth systems and the condition of our natural resources."

The Department of the Interior has substantial coastal and ocean resource management responsibilities and a critical role in implementing the Administration's National Ocean Policy. The USGS will continue leading the development of a national information management system for coastal, oceanic and Great Lake resources. This involves conducting a number of efforts important in managing resources with other Federal, State, tribal, and regional partners. Efforts include constructing a prototype Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning Internet portal for the Gulf of Mexico, developing modeling tools to forecast coastal vulnerability to projected sea level rise and predicted coastal storms, and establishing data standards and undertaking gap analysis to target future priority data collection activities.