

USGS COALITION

July 21, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chairwoman Collins, and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the [USGS Coalition](#) and its member organizations, we strongly urge Congress to reject the proposed elimination of the U.S. Geological Survey's Ecosystems Mission Area and to sustain robust funding for the USGS in the FY2026 appropriations process.

The Ecosystems Mission Area, funded at \$292.9 million in FY 2025, delivers critical biological and ecological science that informs the effective and efficient management of the nation's lands, waters, and resources such as fish, wildlife, minerals, and timber held in the public trust by the federal government. The Administration's FY 2026 proposal to eliminate this mission area would dismantle decades of scientific infrastructure, hinder the ability of federal, state, Tribal, and local agencies to respond to escalating environmental threats, and compromise public health, national security, and economic resilience. As a non-regulatory entity, the Ecosystems Mission Area plays an important role in empowered local decision-making. Eliminating this program would disrupt longstanding partnerships, limit access to critical land and water data, and reduce the effectiveness of federal, state, Tribal, and local agencies in managing their resources.

Ecosystems Mission Area science underpins a wide array of bipartisan priorities, including:

- Robust local and regional management of rangelands, forests, wetlands, and other working and natural lands through ecosystems monitoring, mapping, and assessments.

- Wildlife disease surveillance and response, such as Chronic Wasting Disease and avian influenza, which threaten food security, rural economies, and biodiversity.
- Invasive species management, including Asian carp, Burmese pythons, cheatgrass, and zebra mussels, which cost the U.S. economy over \$21 billion annually in damage to infrastructure, ecosystems, and agriculture. As well as invasive exotic grasses like cheatgrass in the Western US that is a significant catalyst for rangeland fires.
- Water quality and aquatic health research that supports Clean Water Act compliance, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and drinking water protection.
- Hazard resilience science that informs decision-making in response to wildfires, drought, flooding, sea level rise, and habitat loss.
- Environmental contaminant monitoring, such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and mercury, which directly impact human health, agriculture, and wildlife.

This work has broad geographic reach. The Ecosystems Mission Area operates research centers and field stations in nearly every state, ensuring that every region benefits from locally relevant, science-based tools for conservation and land management. The EMA Land Change Science program develops pragmatic strategies and tools to safeguard communities, people, economically important natural resources, and infrastructure from unpredictable threats such as fire, drought, and floods. In addition, such strategies and tools are essential to restoration and recovery efforts after major disasters.

The Ecosystems Mission Area also supports 43 Cooperative Research Units (CRUs) in 41 states at 44 host universities. These highly cost-effective partnerships – leveraging \$3 of partner funds for every \$1 of federal money – with state agencies and public universities train future natural resource professionals and deliver applied science aligned with local, state, and federal conservation priorities. CRUs represent a critical bridge between science and practice. Together, the Ecosystems Mission Area and CRUs support hundreds of jobs across all 50 states—including early-career scientists, graduate students, and field technicians—contributing directly to the STEM workforce pipeline.

Eliminating this mission area would reverberate far beyond the USGS and the Department of the Interior. It would:

- Disrupt access to long-term datasets relied on by state fish and wildlife agencies, water boards, and conservation districts.
- Undermine Tribal co-management efforts and collaborative science partnerships.
- Weaken the more than \$1 trillion outdoor recreation economy by limiting data needed to manage wildlife populations, fisheries, and habitat health.
- Leave emergency managers without essential decision-support tools used to forecast wildfire behavior, model post-burn landslide risk, or evaluate ecosystem services like carbon sequestration.
- Compromise the ability of local governments to protect public health and respond to environmental hazards.

This is not merely an environmental concern, it is a matter of national interest. The Ecosystems Mission Area delivers actionable, non-regulatory science that supports landowners, local governments, Tribal leaders, and coastal and rural communities across the country.

We respectfully urge Congress to maintain FY2025 funding levels for the USGS Ecosystems Mission Area in FY2026 and to include strong report language affirming its critical contributions to science, stewardship, and national resilience.

Sincerely,

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