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*"Rummaging in the government's attic"*

Description of document: Three (3) US Geological Survey (USGS) Reports on Science Policy, 2016, 2010, 2007

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From: GS-D-EI\_Freedom of Information Act <[foia@usgs.gov](mailto:foia@usgs.gov)>  
Cc: foia <[foia@usgs.gov](mailto:foia@usgs.gov)>  
Sent: Thu, Jun 22, 2017 4:22 pm  
Subject: FOIA: USGS-2017-00143 - Acknowledgment of your FOIA Request & Final Response

This letter is both our acknowledgment and final response pursuant to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated June 03, 2017, and received by the USGS FOIA office on June 05, 2017. The USGS assigned it control number USGS 2017-00143. Please cite this number in any future communications with the USGS regarding your request.

You requested the following information:

1. A copy of Public Access to Results of USGS-Funded Research: Scholarly Publications and Digital Data (03/08/16).
2. A copy of Neutral Science: Nonadvocacy at the USGS (05-03-10).
3. Why We Value Alerting Senior Leaders About Policy-Sensitive or High-Visibility Reports (02-12-07).USGS Responsive Information

In response to your request, the Bureau located three documents (totaling five [5] pages) that are responsive to your request. I have enclosed "Public Access to Results of USGS-Funded Research Scholarly Publications and Digital Data\_08Mar2016" in portable document format (PDF) (Two [2] pages), "Neutral Science\_Nonadvocacy at the USGS\_03May2010" in portable document format (PDF) (One [1] page), as well as "Why We Value Alerting Senior Leaders About Policy-Sensitive or High-Visibility Reports\_12Feb2007", in portable document format (PDF) (Two [2] pages), which are being released to you in their entirety.

See attachments:

- Public Access to Results of USGS-Funded Research Scholarly Publications and Digital Data\_08Mar2016 (Two [2] pages)
- Neutral Science\_Nonadvocacy at the USGS\_03May2010 (One [1] page)
- Why We Value Alerting Senior Leaders About Policy-Sensitive or High-Visibility Reports\_12Feb2007 (Two [2] pages)

We classified you as an "other-use" requester. As such, we may charge you for some of our search and duplication costs, but we will not charge you for our review costs; you are also entitled to up to 2 hours of search time and 100 pages of photocopies (or an equivalent volume) for free. See 43 C.F.R. § 2.39.

After taking into consideration your fee category entitlements, our processing costs are less than \$50.00, we will not bill you because the cost of collection would be greater than the fee collected. See 43 C.F.R. § 2.49(a)(1).

We use Multitrack Processing to process FOIA requests. Your request was originally placed in the Normal processing track.

The 2007 FOIA amendments created the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) to offer mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and Federal agencies as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation. Using OGIS services does not affect your right to pursue litigation.

You may contact OGIS in any of the following ways:

Office of Government Information Services  
National Archives and Records Administration  
8601 Adelphi Road - OGIS  
College Park, MD 20740-6001  
E-mail: [ogis@nara.gov](mailto:ogis@nara.gov)  
Web: <https://ogis.archives.gov>  
Telephone: (202) 741-5770  
Fax: (202) 741-5769  
Toll-free: 1-877-684-6448

Please note that using OGIS services does not affect the timing of filing an appeal with the Department's FOIA & Privacy Act Appeals Officer.

Additionally, you may also seek dispute resolution services from our FOIA Public Liaison, Mr. Brian May. He can be reached by phone at (443) 4985521, By fax at (443) 4985510, by email at [foia@usgs.gov](mailto:foia@usgs.gov), by mail at U.S. Geological Survey, FOIA Public Liaison, 5522 Research Park Drive, Baltimore, MD 21228.

This completes our response under your request. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [foia@usgs.gov](mailto:foia@usgs.gov).

Enclosures:

1. Public Access to Results of USGS-Funded Research Scholarly Publications and Digital Data\_08Mar2016 (Two [2] pages).
2. Neutral Science\_Nonadvocacy at the USGS\_03May2010 (One [1] page).
3. Why We Value Alerting Senior Leaders About Policy-Sensitive or High-Visibility Reports\_12Feb2007 (Two [2] pages)

V/r  
Andreas

//SIGNED//

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# Public Access to Results of USGS-Funded Research: Scholarly Publications and Digital Data

By [Bill Werkheiser](#) [All-Employee Memos](#), [Deputy Director](#), [Federal Policy](#), [NeedToKnow: Important Update](#), [Science Quality & Integrity \(OSQI\)](#)

Tags: [Executive Leadership Team \(ELT\)](#), [public access plan](#)

- March 8, 2016



As the Nation's premier earth science agency, we take very seriously the charge of providing the science needed for understanding the changing world around us. Just as important: making our valuable science accessible to all. It is for this reason that I am announcing the Bureau's new public access plan, which will make it easier for anyone to find and use the research our world-class scientists publish, regardless of where it is published.

This plan applies to scholarly publications and unclassified or otherwise unrestricted digital research data (i.e., digital data supporting research findings) where the publication and data are produced wholly or partially with USGS funding, unless otherwise prohibited by law, regulation, or policy. The plan applies whether the publication or research data was produced in whole or in part by the USGS, and extends to our contract employees, financial assistance awardees, other grantees, and other contractor entities.

The new public access plan requires that no later than 12 months after publication (the 12-month embargo period) all USGS-authored or -funded journal publications will be made available free to the public. It further stipulates that data upon which conclusions in USGS-authored publications rely be made available, free to the public, in machine-readable form at the same time or before release of the scholarly publication.

On February 22, 2013, the Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), Dr. John Holdren, issued a memorandum to all agency and department heads entitled, *Increasing Access to the Results of Federally Funded Scientific Research*. The memo directed federal agencies with more than \$100 million in annual research and development budgets to develop plans for increasing public access to peer-reviewed scientific publications and digital data resulting from federally funded research investments. The USGS is the only agency within the Department of the Interior to meet this threshold.

On January 8, 2016, the USGS received clearance from the OSTP and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for the USGS-authored plan entitled *Public Access to Results of Federally Funded Research at the U.S. Geological Survey: Scholarly Publications and Digital Data*. This plan spells out how the USGS will meet open access and open data requirements as stipulated in the OSTP open access and OMB open data memoranda of 2013. Full compliance with this plan begins October 1, 2016 (the effective date). You can view the [plan and associated details on our Web site](#).

In order to meet the requirements of the plan, existing USGS Fundamental Science Practices have been or are being updated to include requirements for approval and release of scholarly publications and data and software, as well as the inclusion of data management plans in all new research proposals and grants. Accepted manuscripts for all outside publications must be placed in the USGS Information Product Data System (IPDS), which acts as an archive for USGS-authored or -funded scholarly publications. If a given journal refuses to provide free public access after the 12-month embargo period, the accepted manuscript will be taken from the IPDS archive and provided to the public through the Publications Warehouse (PW). Otherwise, the published journal article is accessed from a link within PW to the journal. In order to identify USGS-authored or -funded publications, all authors employed or funded by the USGS are required to obtain an Open Researcher and Contributor ID (refer to [orcid.org](http://orcid.org)).

I look forward to USGS scientists and the public realizing the benefit of our new public access plan and thank you in advance for doing your part to make this necessary change as smooth as possible.

**Bill Werkheiser**  
Deputy Director

### **About Bill Werkheiser**

Bill Werkheiser is currently serving as Acting Director of the USGS. He is responsible for leading the Nation's largest water, Earth, and biological sciences and civilian mapping agency.

# Neutral Science: Nonadvocacy at the USGS

By [Marcia McNutt](#) Director, [USGS Policy](#)

• May 3, 2010



The USGS's reputation for reliable, unbiased science is the reason others look to us as the Nation's premier Natural sciences agency.

We work on high visibility issues and problems that matter. As the users and uses of our information and results continue to rapidly expand, we must constantly guard against being drawn in by those who would seek to claim the USGS imprimatur in promoting a particular cause or issue. We welcome that our science is used in many ways and in furthering many causes—that is the proof of our relevance. But, we must always let our science speak for itself. The USGS, as an organization, must never be perceived as endorsing any position or being aligned with any group. We must never leave ourselves open to criticism that our science is influenced by special interest. I can think of nothing that would be more damaging to this institution.

As representatives of USGS, it is our duty to protect the reputation of this bureau and the science that we conduct by keeping communication about our science neutral and impartial.

The USGS Fundamental Science Practices hold us to a strict code of scientific integrity and objectivity— from how scientific activities are planned to how they are conducted, to how they are published and communicated. This policy mandates non-advocacy when communicating about USGS science.

I want to take this time to remind you that the USGS Manual states: “All USGS products, materials, and communications with the media must remain neutral and not advocate, persuade, advise, recommend, sanction or prescribe actions.” ([Read the policy.](#)) This applies to comments to the media, letters to the editor, and opinion pieces. If you are unsure whether a statement could be interpreted as advocacy, please contact your Bureau Approving Official.

This doesn't mean that you have to leave complex science open to misinterpretation by the public or the media. Communicate science in terms the public can grasp, understand, and appreciate — just don't cross the line into advocacy. By crossing that line, you put the reputation of the entire agency at risk.

## About Marcia McNutt

Marcia McNutt is a former Director of the US Geological Survey.

# Why We Value Alerting Senior Leaders About Policy-Sensitive or High-Visibility Reports

By [Mark Myers](#) All-Employee Memos, [Communications and Publishing \(OCAP\)](#), [Leadership](#), [Policy](#), [USGS Policy](#)

- February 12, 2007

**To:** All USGS Employees

**From:** Associate Directors and Regional Directors

**Subject:** Value of alerting senior leaders about policy-sensitive or high-visibility reports

*Hear USGS Director Mark Myers and Associate Directors Bob Hirsch and Sue Haseltine discuss the Fundamental Science Practices in CoreCast, the USGS podcast—go to [internal.usgs.gov](http://internal.usgs.gov) and click “USGS CoreCast” in the upper right-hand corner.*

Recent media attention regarding USGS’s Fundamental Science Practices policy has raised questions about why we require senior leaders and the Office of Communications to be notified about policy-sensitive or high-visibility information products prior to publishing. We want to clarify the purpose of the policy so that all employees understand why it is critically important to the integrity of USGS science.

USGS [Survey Manual chapter 502-4 6.D](#) (Fundamental Science Practices: Review, Approval, and Release of Information Products) states that approving officials should “alert appropriate offices (including the Office of Communications) or officials with regard to policy-sensitive or high-visibility information products that are likely to be of interest or potentially controversial to the Bureau, the Department of the Interior, other Federal agencies; State, local, and/or Tribal governmental organizations; the scientific community; the public; or a specific industry or interest.”

Some in the news media have surmised this requirement to be an extra layer of review prior to approval of a report. That simply is not the case. Approving officials decide whether notification is warranted only **after** a report is approved based on scientific merit.

Some even suspect that this requirement was established to enable Bureau or Department leaders to modify our reports to suit political agendas. This is not true. The decision to notify only happens after approval.

Furthermore, some assume that we maintain a list of topics or words that, if found, will flag a report for notification. Again, not true. Whether a report is policy sensitive or will be highly visible is a subjective judgment of the approving official.

There are four reasons we require these types of products be brought to the attention of USGS leadership and the Office of Communications:

1. Identification of these reports prior to their release gives the Director, Associate Directors, Regional Directors, and the Office of Communications a chance to help the product make the greatest impact possible and reflect positively on the quality, usefulness, and objectivity of all USGS science.



News releases, op-ed's, Web sites, and briefings for Congress, Department officials, and our partner organizations are some of the methods that can be used to launch a report. Twelve years ago, Congress considered abolishing the USGS because our role and significance were not well understood. Effective communication maximizes the visibility of the important work we do and minimizes the chance that our work will be misunderstood or credited to others.

2. We are the science bureau of the Department of the Interior, and as such, our science results in information that guides formation of the Department's policies. We must ensure that Departmental officials hear about our work directly from us rather than from the news media, interest groups, or others.

3. At times, our scientific results may be seen as "bad news" by a governmental agency, a partner organization, or a customer. It is important they hear the news directly from us, rather than be taken by surprise. Being open and upfront, and being responsive to their questions, is key to maintaining positive relationships with these groups.

4. No public official likes being blindsided. It's in our best interest for them to be prepared if someone says, "I saw a story in the *New York Times* about USGS research. What do you know about it? How will it impact decisions you make?" Also, by proactively sharing our science, we bring it to the attention of public officials and encourage them to seek us out when they have questions or need more information.

We hope the message is clear that the notification requirement in our Fundamental Science Practices policy is in place not to restrict USGS science, but **to advance it and add value to it**. The more opportunities we have to highlight our work and its impact—policy-sensitive, high-visibility, or otherwise—the greater the understanding by and appreciation of others for USGS capabilities and expertise.