

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 5, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum,

We write to express concern over recent and proposed actions by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and broader administrative decisions that together threaten the integrity and continuity of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Specifically, the potential termination of General Services Administration (GSA) leases supporting USGS centers across the country—alongside USGS’s proposed FY2026 budget cut of \$564 million and the reported planned terminations of hundreds of scientists—represents a multi-front assault on the nation’s scientific infrastructure.

The USGS is a premier science agency with a critical role in monitoring and analyzing the nation’s resources, including water, ecosystems, natural hazards, minerals, and energy. Its scientific expertise and robust data collection efforts support public safety, environmental stewardship, and national economic resilience. USGS’s work underpins the ability of federal, state, and local governments, Tribal nations, industry, and communities to make informed decisions—particularly in areas such as disaster preparedness, climate adaptation, water resource management, and ecosystem protection.

The proposed budget cuts are not about “efficiency”—they represent a retreat from federal responsibility and a dismantling of the scientific infrastructure that communities, industries, and governments depend on every day. USGS supports work that directly protects public health, strengthens our economy, and informs disaster preparedness and response. These proposed budget cuts could mean abandoning research and monitoring that helps farmers guard against wildlife diseases like avian flu, delaying when real-time water and hazard data is provided for disaster response, and ending collaborations that monitor invasive species, harmful algal blooms and wildfire risks. While these impacts are not yet certain, they represent serious risks for communities, Tribes, state and local governments, and natural resource managers who depend on USGS science to make informed, often life-saving decisions. As demonstrated throughout its nearly 150 years of existence, USGS science is not optional; it is essential.

The potential termination of USGS leases, many of which house Water Science Centers, Climate Adaptation Science Centers, and Ecosystems Research Centers, threatens regional scientific capacity at a time when local expertise and place-based science are most needed. These facilities provide critical support to states, local communities, and Tribal Nations as they confront unprecedented drought, wildfires, habitat loss, and other climate-related disruptions. Reliable

scientific information is essential to both our national economy and the safety of communities across the country.

While DOGE's actions are framed as efficiency measures, the potential impact of terminating these leases – without transparent criteria or coordination – as well as slashing \$564 million from the budget and crippling of the scientific workforce raises serious questions about continuity of operations. If implemented, these changes to USGS would directly impair the federal government's ability to assess and respond to threats in real time.

Given this uncertainty and the far-reaching implications of these actions, we request immediate clarity on the following by **June 19, 2025**:

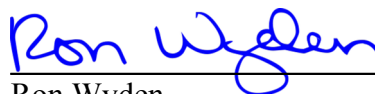
1. What is the current status of all USGS leases and what facilities are at risk of lease termination?
2. What criteria were used to select these leases for potential termination, and how was USGS consulted in this process?
3. What plans are in place to ensure uninterrupted mission support—particularly for key activities under the Water Resources, Natural Hazards, and Ecosystems Mission Areas—if these facilities are closed?
4. Where will affected employees be relocated, and how will critical field and lab operations be maintained in the interim?
5. How will USGS ensure that existing commitments to state and local governments, tribal partners, and other stakeholders are honored, particularly for time-sensitive water data and hazard alerts?
6. What USGS staff positions are on the list for termination (please include title and location)? When will the terminations be implemented?
7. Do any of the USGS employees on the list for termination have salaries funded by reimbursable contracts with external partners? If so, how many such employees are affected, and what is the amount of federal savings that would be generated from their termination?
8. Given the planned reduction in force, how will existing staff fill the gaps in order to fulfill the USGS mission?
9. What programs will be eliminated by the \$564 million proposed budget cut?

The scientific integrity, public safety responsibilities, and operational continuity of the USGS must not be compromised by administrative actions taken without proper oversight or consultation. We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Energy and Natural
Resources



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



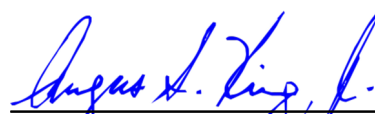
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



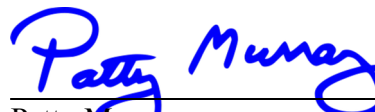
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



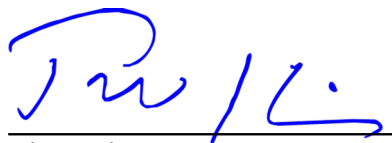
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator