STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

July 25, 2019

Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the scientific integrity enterprise that supports science at the Department of the Interior (Department).

Scientific Integrity at the Department of the Interior

First and foremost, scientific and scholarly information considered in Departmental decision making must be robust and of the highest quality. Most importantly, it must be trustworthy. The Department's reputation for scientific integrity is central to the Department's mission. Our scientific integrity infrastructure has been established over the past decade and it is designed to protect the scientific record, independent of individual administrations. The Department's scientific integrity policy assures the integrity of scientific and scholarly activities it conducts and the science and scholarship it uses to inform management and public policy decisions. Our policy[1] was put in place in 2011, and subsequently the Department was lauded as an early adopter and leader across the federal government for scientific integrity.

The Department's Scientific Integrity Officer for more than three years has been William Werkheiser, a long-serving employee of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). During his 30-year tenure in government, he served most recently as Deputy Director of the USGS. Prior to this position, he was the Associate Director for Water, overseeing all aspects of the bureau's programs in water science. He was also appointed Science Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior in February 2019.

The Department defines scientific integrity as the adherence to ethical and professional standards that lead to objective, clear, and reproducible science. We recognize that promoting scientific integrity is critical to protecting science from bias, fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. The goals and purpose of our policy have not changed since 2011. However, we recognized the need to update the policy and developed a procedural handbook in 2014[2] to provide procedures and guidance for implementing the policy. These changes strengthened integrity in the Department by building additional supporting infrastructure and by describing the purpose and process in greater detail. Most recently, Secretary's Order 3369, "Promoting Open Science," signed in

[1] https://www.doi.gov/scientificintegrity
[2] https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/elips/documents/305%20DM%203_%20Handbook%20-%20Scientific%20Integrity%20Procedures.pdf

2018, will enhance the Department's reputation as a leader in the field of scientific integrity by making the Department's data, analysis, and methodology more available to the public.

While our policy is well known and objectively embodies the ideals of scientific integrity, this statement focuses on its implementation and the elements that make up the scientific integrity infrastructure here at the Department. This topic was most recently reviewed by the Government Accountability Office (GAO)[3] in its April 2019 Report, "Scientific Integrity Policies: Additional Actions Could Strengthen Integrity of Federal Research", which looked specifically at nine agencies including USGS. While that Report found that USGS had taken a number of significant steps to achieve the objectives of its scientific integrity policy, we would like to highlight some of the Department-centric elements not discussed in the GAO assessment.

1. *Providing Oversight: Department Scientific Integrity Officer and Bureau Scientific Integrity Officers (BSIO's)*

   At the Departmental level, the DSIO provides Department-wide leadership and implements the scientific integrity policy. In addition, each bureau within the Department has a Bureau Scientific Integrity Officer (BSIO) responsible for the implementation of the scientific integrity policy at their bureau. All of these employees perform these duties ancillary to their position of record. The DSIO and BSIOs meet twice a year to discuss best practices, creating economies of scale on cross cutting initiatives like training, trend analysis, policy development, and program improvements. The responsibilities of these positions, as well as others in the Department that are integral to the process, are defined in the Department's policies.

2. *Procedures for Identifying and Addressing Alleged Violations of the Scientific Integrity Policy*

   The Department's policy and Handbook also outline the process for addressing violations of the scientific integrity policy, including how to report an allegation, how they are reviewed, and how they are resolved. In summary, scientific integrity allegations can be formally reported to the Office of the Executive Secretariat (OES) ("Formal Allegations") or can be informally reported to scientific integrity staff at a bureau through a scientific integrity ombudsman or mediation route ("Informal Allegations"). Informal allegations are an important mechanism for federal scientists to resolve issues without initiating a formal review, which may not be appropriate depending on the issue. Following review, informal allegations can be elevated to OES by the BSIO as formal allegations.

[3] https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/698231.pdf

All allegations receive an initial review. The BSIO, if a single bureau is involved, is responsible for the receipt of an allegation and making the final determination as to whether scientific integrity has been lost. The DSIO acts as the decision-maker when an allegation involves multiple bureaus or the Office of the Secretary. The dispensation of all formal allegations is made available to the public on the Department's Scientific Integrity web page (case closed summaries)[4].

3. *Training/Educating Staff*

Starting in 2015, scientific integrity training has been a requirement for most Department scientists, managers, and leadership, with a special emphasis on understanding the Code of Scientific and Scholarly Conduct, as specified in the policy. The training is periodically updated with input from all of the BSIOs. The training emphasizes how to report an allegation of a violation of the Department's scientific integrity policy and describes protections available from offices outside the scientific integrity program (through the Office of Special Counsel, Office of the Inspector General, Merit Systems Protection Board, and others) to those who make an allegation of a loss of scientific integrity.

4. *Continuing Improvement*

Our infrastructure is not static, and we strive to improve and maintain a culture of integrity. In addition to updates to the policy and the creation of a Handbook in 2014 to better implement our policy, now, in response to a recommendation from the 2019 GAO Report, USGS is advancing efforts to measure the effectiveness of its scientific integrity activities. USGS is also responsive to findings of misconduct. As a result of a misconduct finding at the USGS, the bureau is implementing a quality management system (QMS) for all of its laboratories[5]. The QMS system will ensure laboratory data uphold the bureau's scientific reputation, underscoring its mandate to provide reliable science to address pressing societal issues now and well into the future.

In addition to appointing a senior career Science Advisor and issuance of Secretary Order 3369, the Department is also undertaking other activities related to scientific integrity:

- In April of 2019, the Office of Management and Budget issued additional guidance for agency responsibilities under the Information Quality Act, emphasizing quality, objectivity, utility and integrity of information disseminated by federal agencies; the Department is in the process of implementing these changes.

[4] https://www.doi.gov/scientificintegrity/closed-cases

[5] https://www.usgs.gov/about/organization/science-support/survey-manual/im-osqi-2018-01-quality-management-system-usgs

- The Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) announced in May of 2019 that the National Science and Technology Council will establish a Subcommittee on Rigor and Integrity in Research to address scientific integrity and other issues; the Department of the Interior is actively engaged with interagency partners on this effort.

Conclusion

The Department of the Interior has a rich and long-standing culture of scientific integrity that prevails independent of individual Administrations. Scientific integrity is a serious matter, and the Department has worked hard to ensure that the scientific activities that it carries out are the result of robust and independent processes.