

Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Legislative Hearing
1324 Longworth House Office Building
July 21, 2026
10:15AM

- **H.R. 8003 (Rep. Deluzio)**, *“Expanding the Fast Track Act of 2026”*
- **H.R. 9640 (Rep. Wittman)**, *“Earth MRI Reauthorization Act of 2026”*
- **H.R. 9646 (Rep. Hurd)**, *“Quantum-Enhanced Critical Minerals Mapping Act of 2026”*

Questions from Rep. Fulcher for Mr. Matt Heller, State Geologist, Virginia Department of Energy

1. Prior to the Earth MRI program, how often did you collaborate with other states for geologic programs? How has that increased since Earth MRI’s implementation?

Virginia seldom collaborated with other states on geologic programs prior to 2019 when Earth MRI was implemented. The only modern collaboration I am aware of was a joint effort to develop a National Geothermal Data System from 2010 to 2014. Since 2019 we have collaborated with several states on projects through the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program (NCGMP) or Earth MRI. Around the same time Earth MRI was implemented, NCGMP began encouraging projects to map at resolutions appropriate to complete national map coverage and improve stratigraphic correlation across state boundaries. Through NCGMP we have collaborated with South Carolina, North Carolina, Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey to improve stratigraphic correlation of Coastal Plain sediments, West Virginia, and Kentucky to improve mapping of unconsolidated sediments in the Appalachians, and North Carolina and West Virginia to improve maps in areas that straddle state boundaries. Through Earth MRI we are collaborating with North Carolina and South Carolina to investigate REEs in regolith developed on granite and plan to collaborate with West Virginia to characterize igneous rocks identified on an Earth MRI-funded high-resolution geophysical survey.

Both Earth MRI and NCGMP encourage collaborative projects to assess resources and improve mapping across state boundaries, and these efforts have multiple benefits. State geological surveys can leverage expertise and resources to complete work that they would not be able to do independently. Users can access needed information from a single comprehensive map or report rather than stitching data together from multiple sources

that may be inconsistent in format or interpretation. The U.S. Geological Survey sometimes plays an important role in coordinating or supporting projects that cross state boundaries. This collaboration at the federal level brings in additional expertise and resources, and results in superior end-products.