

Questions for the Record
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
House Natural Resources Committee
Oversight Hearing
Status of Drought Conditions Throughout the Western U.S.
May 25, 2021

Questions from Rep. Grace F. Napolitano

Question 1: There was a report issued by the Office of the Inspector General on April 1st of this year that discussed weaknesses in the USGS system. The evaluation specifically revealed control deficiencies for hardware and software asset management and configuration management. Can you outline how DOI is going to resolve these deficiencies? What would the consequences be if these vulnerabilities are not patched?

Response: The report identified 8 recommendations, 3 for the DOI Chief Information Officer and 5 for the USGS. Bureaus and offices across the Department of the Interior (DOI) are to update hardware within the DOI networks limited by the capabilities of the Continuous Diagnostic and Mitigation (CDM) tools in place and in accordance with program guidance. CDM is the Department of Homeland Security initiative to further secure Federal IT systems. Specifically, the Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) will conduct a review of the guidance, procedures, and tools in place to resolve this report's recommendation.

New CDM Software Asset Management tool(s) are being considered to replace previous CDM tools with the intention of fully addressing gaps. This selection, from Department of Homeland Security funding through implementation, does not have a projected resolution date. The DOI will utilize the CDM and other tools currently in place to maintain reasonable software inventory focusing on managing vulnerabilities, risks, and critical configuration requirements. Specifically, CISO will conduct a review of the guidance, procedures, and tools in place to resolve this report's recommendation.

The USGS Information Security Office (ISO) will update procedures for reviewing authorized ports, services, and protocols and restricting the use of unauthorized ports, protocols, and services at the host level. The USGS ISO will also work to determine if a Plan of Action and Milestones is needed to track compliance. The USGS will utilize the procedures provided by the USGS ISO to establish a listing of authorized ports, services, and protocols for the Landsat system. Where host-level restrictions may cause mission operational impact, the USGS Landsat Project will develop a Plan of Action and Milestones to ensure compliance.

The USGS ISO will update procedures to ensure that the process to identify and mitigate high-risk vulnerabilities within 30 days, as required by OCIO policy, is followed. The USGS ISO will also work to determine if a Plan of Action and Milestones is needed to track compliance. The specific finding in the report was corrected when alerted by the OIG and validated in February 2019 Enterprise Vulnerability Management System scan reports. The USGS has taken steps since the audit to improve vulnerability management compliance. The USGS will continue to follow all DOI and USGS vulnerability management guidelines. The USGS will audit and report that high-risk vulnerabilities are being mitigated within 30 days, as required by OCIO policy.

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Question 2: As you are aware, streamgages haven’t been maintained and with the West in a dire drought, we need them operable to help agencies engage in stream flows. How many streamgages are currently operable? Where are they located and how many need repair?

Response: USGS maintains a network of 4,714 streamgages across the West, of which 3,552 monitor streamflow and 1,162 monitor only water-levels. These streamgages are supported by a mixture Federal appropriations and partner funding. The locations of all operational streamgages can be seen on our [USGS National Water Dashboard](#).

All streamgages operated by the USGS are actively maintained and thus, none is in need of repair. That said, across the West, 7 streamgages have been discontinued over the last year and an additional 19 streamgages are at-risk of being discontinued in 2021 due to a lack of funding. The locations of all at-risk or discontinued gages can be seen on our [Endangered, Discontinued, and Rescued Streamgage Mapper](#). A table of streamgages in the West by state is provided below, as of June 2, 2021.

Western State	Number of Operational Streamflow Gages	Number of Operational Water-Level-only Gages	Number of At-Risk Streamgages	Number of Streamgages Discontinued in the Last Year
Alaska	89	30	1	3
Arizona	170	32	1	0
California	437	138	1	0
Colorado	313	59	1	0
Idaho	196	32	0	1
Kansas	186	43	0	0
Montana	207	25	1	0
Nebraska	111	32	1	0
Nevada	133	24	1	0
New Mexico	156	36	0	0
North Dakota	104	32	0	0
Oklahoma	147	54	0	0
Oregon	200	119	1	1
South Dakota	105	56	2	0
Texas	542	324	0	0
Utah	133	14	2	0
Washington	235	100	6	2
Wyoming	88	12	1	0
Total	3,552	1,162	19	7