



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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Witnesses, Members Stress the Importance of Data Sharing in Natural Resources Production & Infrastructure Projects

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a [legislative hearing](#) on H.R. 5066, the *Data Preservation Act of 2014*, authored by Natural Resources Committee Member Rep. Dan Benishek, M.D. (MI-01). This legislation would help create jobs and improve the safety of construction projects and natural resources production by ensuring that these projects are moving forward with the most up-to-date and accurate data.

Specifically, this legislation would reauthorize the National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program (NGGDPP) through 2019. This program archives and catalogues geologic, geophysical, and engineering data as well as maps, well logs, and samples to provide value beyond the initial project for which it was acquired. For example in Michigan, the donation of information from a mining company allowed for the discovery of a new potash deposit valued at \$65 billion – creating jobs and growing Michigan’s economy. Potash is a key ingredient in natural fertilizers, which strengthen America’s agriculture and farming industries, food security, as well as America’s balance of trade.

“Back in the 1990s, building on the success of the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program, several professional geologic organizations began to push for a National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program to facilitate the acquisition, archiving and storage of mineral and core data. Each year tens of millions of private and public dollars are spent in the U.S. acquiring geologic and geophysical data by various industries and state and federal agencies. If saved, archived and stored it can be reviewed, reanalyzed and reinterpreted and can help identify and solve environmental problems, locate public safety hazards saving lives, or direct exploration geologists to possible new discoveries of energy and mineral resources,” **said Subcommittee Chairman Doug Lamborn (CO-05).**

“From hunting and fishing to timber and mining, so many jobs in Northern Michigan are tied to the land. That is why maintaining accurate data about the land is so important. My bill will encourage states and universities to collaborate with local companies to preserve their mapping data for the future. We’ve already seen instances where new companies have been able to use this data to go back and find new information, like the recent potash discovery in Western Michigan, which media reports have estimated as being worth as much as \$65 billion. The ability to access this type of data is important for jobs and our economy,” **said**

Rep. Dan Benishek, M.D. (MI-01).

Expert witnesses testified before the Subcommittee on the need for Rep. Benishek's legislation that will allow for data collaboration, sharing, and storage of data that's critical to creating jobs and growing America's economy.

Jonathan D. Arthur Ph. D., P.G., is President of the Association of American State Geologists (AASG) and is the State Geologist of Florida. Arthur called this issue critical and supports the reauthorization of this important program. *"The value of our Nation's geological and geophysical data (e.g., rock and ice cores, fossils, geophysical tapes and paper logs, rock, mineral and fossil samples, aerial photos, field notes) have long been recognized. The fact that significant portions of these materials are irreplaceable due to destruction of outcrops (e.g., construction, quarrying, flooding, landslides), urbanization, restricted access, and prohibitive replacement expenses only increases their importance. If preserved, these materials and data will be invaluable for the next generation of scientific research and education."* This valuable data is crucial to saving lives and locating natural resources that are needed to power America. *"Not only are geological and geophysical data at risk, but scientific clues revealing undiscovered water, mineral and energy resources may be lost, and more importantly, data that can save lives may be lost. This cooperative Federal-State program affords the Nation the opportunity to more fully understand the reserves of water resources and mineral and energy reserves in our lands."*

Theodore A. Pagano, P.G., P.E. is the General Manager at Michigan Potash Company, LLC. Pagano knows firsthand the benefits of sharing this data. It was the sharing of geological data through the Michigan Geological Repository for Research and Education (MGRRE), that was created through the NGGDPP, which allowed for the discovery of a major potash deposit in Michigan. Calling potash the *"world's tightest controlled commodity,"* Pagano added that *"there is enough proven, commercial, potash sitting under Hersey Michigan to double U.S. output for over 150 years, and that's without drilling any new test wells."* Underscoring the importance of this discovery, Pagano noted that according to MGRRE's founder, William B. Harrison III, *"One of the things that makes this so valuable is that it is an incredibly rich deposit that is in easy reach of the enormous demand from Midwest corn and soybean farmers who operate within a 500-mile radius of this deposit. This is an opportunity for new wealth to come from the use of natural resources never tapped before."*

Patrick J. Gooding is the Research Geologist and Manager at the Kentucky Geological Survey's Well Sample and Core Library. Gooding called the detailed examination of geoscience data important to *"research development, discoveries, exploration or new hydrocarbon reservoirs and mineral deposits critical to U.S. energy security and independence."* Highlighting the importance of these data repositories, Gooding noted that they are essential to preserving geoscience data in order to promote the *"utilization of their collections in scientific research, exploration, and development of resources both on and beneath the earth's surface."*

Kevin Gallagher is the Associate Director of Core Science Systems at the U.S. Geological Survey at the Department of the Interior. Gallagher thanked Rep. Benishek for introducing this legislation to ensure the *"rescue and continued preservation of geological and geophysical samples and data."* Gallagher added that *"preserving endangered geoscience collections is significantly more cost effective than recollecting these samples and data."*

Properly housing, inventorying and curating these collections, as we have identified for you today, provides an invaluable resource that underpins a wide variety of research, which can lead to important discoveries, new jobs and a stronger economy.”

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