AASG

Association of American State Geologists

DATA PRESERVATION

AASG

The Association of American State Geologists (AASG) represents the State Geologists of the 50 United States and Puerto Rico. Founded in 1908, AASG seeks to advance the science and practical application of geology and related earth sciences in the United States and its territories, commonwealths, and possessions.

AASG and Preserving Geoscience Data

AASG strongly encourages Congress to fund the "National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program Act of 2005," Section 315 of the Federal Energy Policy Act of 2005, at the fully authorized level of $30 million for each of 5 years. A key to domestic energy and mineral resource security lies in preservation of and ready public access to geologic samples and data that are already in existence. Volumes of expensive and difficult-to-obtain subsurface information (cores, cuttings, and geophysical data) are currently being disposed of by oil and gas and mineral exploration companies, and once these data are lost, they probably will never be replaced. These subsurface data, however, are critical to efficient and effective exploration and management of the nation's natural resources. In addition to exploration for oil and gas, subsurface data are used for development of unconventional energy sources, CO_2 sequestration, minerals exploration, preserving and developing water supplies, mitigating geologic hazards, training of a new generation of geologists and geophysicists, and any number of unanticipated applications.

Photo by Stephen M. Dickson,
Maine Geological Survey.

It is both the immediacy of this disposal and the sacrifice of future benefits to the nation that concern AASG. Geoscience data and collections

- are critical to government and industry's discovery and development of the nation's energy, mineral, and water resources;
- support sound decisions on resource utilization, environmental protection, and disaster preparedness; and
- are essential to academic research and education of both informed citizens and future geoscientists.

Industry and government have made substantial investments to acquire geoscience data and collections. For example, core reposited at the U.S. Geological Survey's Core Research Center in Colorado is estimated to have a replacement value of $10 billion. Additionally, seismic data sets

Photo by David M. Stephens,
Bureau of Economic Geology, The University of Texas at Austin.

represent tens of billions of dollars of geophysical data. As expensive as the data are to collect, however, cost of maintaining them in collections is a fraction of what it would cost to replace them, if they in fact could be collected again. Through preservation, existing geoscience data and collections can be utilized again and again as new technologies are developed and new scientific hypotheses are tested.

Historically, state geological surveys have collected geoscience data as part of their missions. These data typically consist of geological, geochemical, geophysical, and engineering data; maps; well logs; and samples of rocks, minerals, and fossils that are representative of a particular state's geology. As repositories of these data, state geological surveys have considerable experience in cataloging, preserving, and archiving both physical and digital data that characterize surface and subsurface geology in each state. As keepers of these data, state geological surveys routinely analyze these data as they prepare maps and reports. The state geological surveys are, moreover, experienced in providing ready access to others for examination, study, and sampling of these data and Earth materials.

Photo by David M. Stephens,
Bureau of Economic Geology, The University of Texas at Austin.

AASG endorses the National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program Act of 2005. Specifically, AASG supports the Act's directive to

- **establish regional geoscience data and sample-archive centers that will preserve and improve access to domestic geoscience data through Federal, State, and private-sector partnerships;**
- **support development of a comprehensive, integrated, long-term management plan to ensure preservation of geoscience information; and**
- **encourage all stakeholders in geoscience data utilization to coordinate their efforts and provide access to data.**

AASG strongly supports Federal appropriations related to preserving, archiving, accessing, and using geological, geochemical, and geophysical samples and data.

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Bureau of Economic Geology, The University of Texas at Austin.

For more information contact:

President
Chacko John
cjohn@lsu.edu
Louisiana

President-Elect
Berry H. (Nick) Tew
ntew@gsa.state.al.us
Alabama

Chair, Geoscience Data Preservation Committee
John C. Steinmetz
jsteinm@indiana.edu
Indiana

On the Web: www.stategeologists.org

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