



CHARTER  
of the  
UNITED STATES GROUP ON EARTH OBSERVATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE  
of the  
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND SUSTAINABILITY  
NATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

**A. Official Designation**

The United States Group on Earth Observations Subcommittee (USGEO) is hereby re-chartered by action of the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Sustainability (CENRS), National Science and Technology Council (NSTC).

**B. Purpose and Scope**

Pursuant to Sec. 702 of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-267),<sup>†</sup> the USGEO is to: (1) coordinate, plan, and assess Federal Earth observation activities in cooperation with domestic stakeholders; (2) foster improved Earth system data management and interoperability throughout the Federal Government; and (3) engage international stakeholders by formulating the U.S. position for, and coordinating U.S. participation in, the intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO) based in Geneva, Switzerland.

**C. Functions**

USGEO, in coordination with other relevant CENRS subcommittees, will:

1. Provide advice to CENRS on matters relating to Earth observations data and information, and serve as a forum to facilitate planning, coordination, and communication among Federal agencies engaged in Earth observations and Earth system data management.
2. Advance U.S. interests in the intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO), which is building a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS).
3. Facilitate and update, under the direction of the Executive Office of the President and at the request of Congress, a portfolio assessment of Federal Earth observation systems every three years that would include: (a) a review of the Earth observation data needed to meet both routine user requirements and emerging research needs; (b) recommendations for future Earth observations planning; and (c) a deliberative process for establishing priorities among Earth observation systems based on user requirements and research needs, recognizing that specific observing system requirements will remain the responsibility of individual agencies.

4. Foster interoperability and accessibility of Earth system data through improved Federal data management frameworks and strengthened user communities that promote data interoperability, access, use, and stewardship, in coordination with other subcommittees of CENRS and existing agency-based and interagency mechanisms such as the Federal Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council and the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC).
5. Foster discussion on use of Earth system data and methods for applying Earth system data to inform decisions.
6. Facilitate collaboration between Federal and non-Federal observing systems and networks, as well as Federal and non-Federal data management activities, consistent with law and regulation.
7. Explore mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and external advisory input to the foregoing national and international Earth observation and data management activities, consistent with law and regulation.

#### **D. Membership**

The following NSTC departments and agencies are represented on the USGEO Subcommittee:

Department of Agriculture;  
Department of Commerce;<sup>1</sup>  
Department of Defense;  
Department of Energy;  
Department of Homeland Security;  
Department of the Interior;<sup>2</sup>  
Department of State;  
Department of Transportation;  
Environmental Protection Agency;  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration;  
National Science Foundation;  
Smithsonian Institution; and  
U.S. Agency for International Development.

The following organizations in the Executive Office of the President are also represented on the USGEO Subcommittee:

Council on Environmental Quality;  
Office of Management and Budget; and,  
Office of Science and Technology Policy (Chair).

Cooperating departments and agencies shall include such other Executive organizations, departments, and agencies as the Chair may designate, as appropriate. The Chair may designate vice-Chairs as appropriate from among the agencies participating in the USGEO.

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<sup>1</sup> Specifically but not exclusively to include: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

<sup>2</sup> Specifically but not exclusively to include: United States Geological Survey.

**E. Private-Sector Interface**

The USGEO may seek advice from members of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology to secure appropriate private-sector advice and will recommend to the CENRS and/or the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy the nature of any additional private-sector advice<sup>3</sup> needed to accomplish its mission. The USGEO may also interact with and receive *ad hoc* advice from various private-sector groups as consistent with the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

**F. Termination Date**

Unless extended by the Co-chairs of the CENRS prior to its expiration, the USGEO shall terminate on March 31, 2017.

**G. Determination**

We hereby determine that the establishment of the United States Group on Earth Observations Subcommittee is in the public interest in connection with the performance of duties imposed on the Executive Branch by law, and that such duties can best be performed through the advice and counsel of such a group.

Approved: 5 April 2013

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<sup>3</sup> The Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. App., as amended, does not explicitly define "private sector", but the phrase is generally understood to include individuals or entities outside the Federal government such as, but not limited to, the following: non-Federal sources, academia, State, local or tribal governments, individual citizens, the public, non-governmental organizations, industry associations, and international bodies.

## ANNEX

### USGEO Senior Steering Group

A Senior Steering Group, chaired by OSTP, will oversee the activities of USGEO, including the establishment of supporting initiatives and programs as appropriate. The following USGEO member agencies will designate representatives to the Senior Steering Group at the Deputy Assistant Secretary level, or above:

- Department of Commerce;
- Department of Interior;
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration;
- National Science Foundation; and
- Office of Science and Technology Policy.

<sup>4</sup> Excerpt of The National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-267):

**SEC. 702. INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH.**

The Director of OSTP shall establish a mechanism to ensure greater coordination of the research, operations, and activities relating to civilian Earth observation of those Agencies, including NASA, that have active programs that either contribute directly or indirectly to these areas. This mechanism should include the development of a strategic implementation plan that is updated at least every 3 years, and includes a process for external independent advisory input. This plan should include a description of the responsibilities of the various Agency roles in Earth observations, recommended cost-sharing and procurement arrangements between Agencies and other entities, including international arrangements, and a plan for ensuring the provision of sustained, long term space-based climate observations. The Director shall provide a report to Congress within 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act on the implementation plan for this mechanism.