

From: James M. Robertson [mailto:jmrober1@wisc.edu]
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To: Jonathan G Price
Subject: State Surveys, Universities, and the NBMG

Jon –

I'm pleased to offer some thoughts on the value of state geological surveys to the state governments they inform, the private sector they support, and the citizens they protect. As we both know, every decision about land-use, mineral and water resources, natural hazards, energy, and environmental protection includes a major geologic component. Good decision-making requires good information, and a fundamental responsibility of state geological surveys is to inform that decision-making with good science. For example, several years ago the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey (WGNHS) was asked by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to provide objective assessments of groundwater management and treatment plans related to a proposed metal mine in northern Wisconsin. Our work helped the state regulatory agencies understand and evaluate the likely outcomes of the proposed plans. I know the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology (NBMG) regularly provides similar objective science to various levels of government in a variety of assessments that include: high-level radioactive waste disposal siting; geothermal energy potential; earthquake hazards; and flooding scenarios. In addition, the NBMG's geologic mapping and related reports have played an essential role in the discovery, development, and continuing growth of your state's remarkable gold and silver industry.

State geological surveys administratively attached to a university, as are the WGNHS and NBMG, have the additional opportunity to more directly apply basic research from the broader university community to current state issues. Both the WGNHS and NBMG perform an important outreach function for their respective universities that helps demonstrate the relevance of those institutions to the taxpayers who support them. This survey-university partnership can generate funded research opportunities for faculty and provide students with professional work experience. Survey scientists may also lend their expertise to the university by teaching an occasional graduate-level seminar or field course that complements or supplements the regular curriculum. Surveys benefit from this relationship by having their scientific staff be part of a larger geological community – including students – that provides intellectual stimulation as well as opportunities for professional growth.

In our experience, a healthy state geological survey – university partnership benefits everyone in the state.

James M. Robertson, PhD
Director and State Geologist
Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey
3817 Mineral Point Road
Madison, WI 53705
tel: 608-263-7384
fax: 608-262-8086
jmrober1@wisc.edu