

Idaho Geological Survey - Advisory Board Meeting

Boise Water Center

322 E. Front Street, Suite 248A

Boise, ID 83702

Meeting Date & Time: November 17, 2016 - 9:00am – 12:00

Present

Ed Ratchford, Director and State Geologist, University of Idaho

Bob Smith, Senior Associate Vice President, University of Idaho

Rich Reed, President, Idaho Association of Professional Geologists

David Hawk, Representative, Office of the Governor

Mike McCurry – Chair, Department of Geological Sciences, Idaho State

Susan Cleverly – Idaho Department of Emergency Management

Chris Dail – Exploration Manager, Midas Gold

James McNamara – Chair, Department of Geosciences, Boise State University

Keith Nottingham - District Geologist, Idaho Transportation Department

Opening and Introductory Remarks

Dr. Smith welcomed the board and thanked them for participating. He reported that the University of Idaho has just hired a new Vice President of Research, Janet Nelson, who will be working on expanding the University's research activities. Since the last board meeting, Dr. Smith was able to participate in the statewide IGS tour with Dr. Ratchford and he commented that he is proud of IGS and proud to be able to support it.

David Hawk made the suggestion that an ad hoc position be created on the IGS Board for a representative from BYU-Idaho. He stated BYU-Idaho doesn't have a graduate program in geology but does have a large undergraduate program and their students are doing good geology in the state. The students are looking for opportunities post degree and this will strengthen the relationship between the universities. Ratchford said he will reach out to BYU-Idaho and extend an invitation.

Ratchford commented the IGS board does not have a chair and suggested the group should consider making that assignment. He also let the board know they can meet more than once a year if they'd like. Possible topics for board discussion include:

- Recommendations to improve Survey services
- Recommendations on fund raising for agency projects and student mentoring programs
- Forward looking aspirations and recommendations for the Survey focused on the next five to ten year cycle; what are the new challenges facing the Survey?

Fiscal Overview of IGS

Ratchford reviewed the IGS budget for the board. Sources of funding for IGS includes appropriations, Y accounts, F&A accounts and grants and contracts. The sum of these for FY16 totaled \$1,126,623. The state appropriation increased slightly over FY15. Grants and contracts decreased from FY15. The primary industry grant is from Midas Gold. IGS does not have any grants from the petroleum industry but did pick up FEMA as a new source of funding this last year. Multi-year grants include funds from USGS, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Transportation Department, Midas Gold, Idaho Department of Emergency Management and Boise State University. The cumulative sum of the multi-year grants is \$540,836.

Ongoing Recruitment of Personnel for IGS Positions

- Geohazards Geologist – This position will be based in Boise and the search committee has pared the applicant pool down to three applicants. Ratchford reported all three finalists are outstanding candidates and they will be making the hiring decision by the end of the month with a possible start date of January or February. Total allocation from the Legislature for salary and operating expenditures is \$128,175 which includes salary plus benefits, a photogrammetry workstation, software upgrades and travel.
- GIS Analyst – This position will be based in Moscow and at the present time there is a national search for applicants. Total allocation from the Legislature for salary and operating expenditures is \$90,360. This position is critical because of the increase in numbers of visitors to the IGS website. In 2010 there were 205,519 visits to the website and it increased to 398,400 in 2016. Downloads from the website have doubled in that same timeframe.
- Management Assistant $\frac{3}{4}$ time – due to retirement
- Groundwater Hydrologist – not started

Passage of House Bill 509

The passage of House Bill 509 provides authority for the Idaho Department of Lands, the Idaho Oil and Gas Conservation Commission and the Idaho Geological Survey to share certain records and oil and gas information. Much of the geologic information that IGS is seeking is currently unavailable to the public due to “trade secret” exemptions under Idaho statutes or has a lengthy period of confidentiality and release. The purpose of IGS request is to assist with the mandate from the State that directs IGS as the lead state agency for the collection, interpretation and dissemination of all geologic information. Ratchford reported that he worked with ID Department of Lands and Idaho Oil and Gas on the passage of the bill.

Ratchford said that all the pieces are in place to begin sharing information and they are within weeks of launching the program. He has funds to purchase a dedicated

server to house records and has hired a first step internet to set up log in credentials for IGS and Idaho Department of Lands. When documents are moved you will be able to tell who moved documents and the documents will also have an electronic tag that says when the document will be released into the public domain.

Topical Discussion of Current Projects, Research & Tasks

A. Stibnite Project (Midas Gold)

B. Abandoned Mines & Lands (ID Dept. of Lands) – These are not just maps but include all kinds of documents. The goal is to put them together in a folio and have queries built in so a search can be conducted using a multitude of choices and cross references. This database is very useful to the public but also to regulatory agencies. To date IGS has scanned over 8843 documents.

C. Petroleum System Modeling & Assessments (USGS & In House)

D. Smith's Ferry Project (ID Transportation Dept.)

E. Geohazard Projects (FEMA & In House)

F. Geothermal & Hydrology Projects (EPSCOR, FORGE & In House)

G. Sage Grouse & BLM's Proposed Mineral Withdrawal (In House)

H. StateMap – Seven New Maps Proposed for FY17 (USGS) - Seven new quadrangles were mapped in 2016. New mapping was conducted in the Weiser-Boise, Rexburg, and Salmon project areas. Mapping was also conducted for ITD and for Midas Gold. Ratchford reported they have teamed up with Jim Coogan from Western Colorado University for mapping projects in the Weiser-Payette area.

I. Data Preservation (USGS) – Board members discussed data preservation and capturing Bill Bonneson's geochemistry and unpublished work. Ratchford stated capturing information before it is lost is much of the work that IGS does and they have one fulltime FTE devoted to data preservation but that position is dependent on grant funding. The board discussed establishing a facility for data storage (core samples, etc.) A number of suggestions were presented for potential sites.

Consolidation of IGS Satellite Offices at Idaho Water Center

Ratchford reported on his proposal for consolidation of two satellite offices in the southern part of the state at the Boise Water Center. The consolidation was discussed at the IGS board meeting in 2015. Following that meeting he held three regional town hall meetings – one in Idaho Falls, one in Boise and one in Coeur d'Alene. The meetings provided an open forum for the public to ask questions and to give feedback. The only dissent for the office consolidation proposal came from two participants at the Idaho Falls meeting and both had ISU affiliations. Ratchford sent a letter of recommendation to the University of Idaho Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED). Final approval was signed by the Vice President of ORED in July of 2016. The IGS office in Pocatello will close at the end of December

2016 in alignment with the retirement of Dr. John Welland. His retirement will prompt a national search and his replacement will report to the Idaho Water Center office. Synergies created by the consolidation of the offices include better coordination of IGS geologic expertise and manpower; central location to deploy IGS geoscientists throughout the State; and better coordination and communication with other State agencies. In the long term it will be a cost effective decision.

The board discussed the closure of the office in Southern Idaho and the loss of the geologist in that area. It was noted that Dr. Welland played an important role, and there was rationale for having a geologist there. It was noted though that the position (water issues) is needed statewide. Ratchford commented he is not in favor of having outposts with just one person but would rather have his team work together and work with State agencies. The comment was made that the board should still think long term to have a geologist at ISU.

Overview of Petroleum Geology research and collaborations

Renee Breedlovestrout, Senior Petroleum Geologist

Breedlovestrout gave an overview of the Payette Basin, Idaho's first producing oil field and the only producing hydrocarbon field in Idaho's history. Idaho is the 31st State in the US to produce oil or gas. Last year the Idaho wells produced 2.6 billion cubic feet of natural gas. There are two different fields in the Payette area; the Hamilton field where Bridge Resources drilled most of the wells; Willow Field where Alta Mesa drilled most of the wells. There is also a separation facility, a processing plant, and a related gas-fired power plant. Breedlovestrout went on to do an overview for the board of the depositional setting and resulting deposition.

Overview of Geohazard Projects

Bill Phillips, Research Geologist

Phillips reported to the board what hazards IGS addresses, what responsibilities IGS has and recent project, challenges and opportunities. Hazards that IGS typically get involved in are earthquakes, landslides and volcanic eruptions. During a declared emergency the Idaho office of Emergency Management coordinates activities but IGS has three important tasks – working with transportation, public works and engineering, and long term community recovery. Phillips reported that IGS became a technical partner of FEMA in 2016.

Overview of Midas Project & Sage Grouse Effort

Virginia Gillerman, Economic Geologist

Gillerman reported that in September 2015 there was a decision by the Secretary of the Interior to withdraw acres from mineral activity in sagebrush focal areas for the preservation of sage grouse. Idaho had 3,854,622 acres of SFAs withdrawn (oil and gas are not considered part of mineral withdrawal). Because of that decision, Governor Otter, requested mineral information on the SFAs in Idaho from IGS.