

**Statement of
David Applegate
Nominee for the Position of
Director of the
United States Geological Survey
at the
U.S. Department of the Interior
Before the
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate**

April 28, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso, for the opportunity to appear before the Committee this morning. It is a great honor to be nominated to serve as the 18th Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, and I appreciate your consideration of my nomination.

I am grateful to have my family with me today, my wife Heidi and daughters Maggie and Bea. I would be remiss not to thank my big brother John for encouraging me to take a geology class in college, the spark that started this journey.

That class led to a major in geology, and ultimately my doctorate, after which I had the transformative experience of working for this Committee as a congressional science fellow. After five years of field work in the Death Valley region of California, I was curious how the knowledge gained studying the inner workings of the planet could aid policymakers in their decision-making.

I quickly learned the importance of using science to understand the consequences and examine the trade-offs of any decision. Thus began my role in understanding the importance that providing excellent science has for decision-makers and the American people. I believe our nation's success is directly tied to our long history of scientific excellence and innovation, and if confirmed I would bring all my ability and experience to bear to support the future success of our nation by ensuring that continues long into the future.

For nearly two decades, I have been lucky enough to pursue that role at the USGS, an agency dedicated to delivering science to inform decisions on some of the most consequential issues facing our nation. That was the case when the USGS was established in 1879 and the order of the day was to characterize the resources of an expanding nation. It is very much the case today when a growing population requires safe and abundant water resources, critical minerals for our energy future, healthy ecosystems that foster our quality of life and fulfill our stewardship responsibilities, and disaster-resilient communities prepared to not only survive but thrive despite the natural hazards we face today and what we may face in a warmer world.

The USGS is a science answer factory for our Nation and our planet. Our science is grounded in world-class mapping, monitoring, and sampling of our changing Earth systems. Our technical expertise to analyze, model and interpret these data results in science products from real-time situational awareness of extreme events to long-term assessments of natural hazards and resources. And the USGS, like me, is committed to delivering that science so that it reaches everyone who needs it, when they need it, in a

form they can use. Scientific integrity and independence is critical to the mission of USGS and it is a mission that I believe in and will foster, if I have the honor of being confirmed for this position. The engine of this factory is its people, and I believe it is important that we invest in them as well as in our data, our technology, and our partnerships. The USGS workforce is very dedicated to the bureau's role as a science leader for the nation. It is critical to continue to nurture that role by hiring and retaining the next generation of talent, and to pass on the accumulated knowledge of our current staff and growing our core capacity to ensure we continue to deliver on our mission even as demands for our science change. It is also vitally important, in all aspects of our science and service mission, to uphold our commitment to scientific integrity and objective results codified in our fundamental science practices. If confirmed, this will be a key priority for me -- to ensure that remains the bedrock of our culture as an organization.

Finally, like much of the work carried out by the Department of the Interior, partnerships are central to the success of the USGS, and, if confirmed, I will work to strengthen our ties across the Department, the federal government, tribes, the states, academia, and the private sector. Many of our offices are co-located with universities, providing ready access to new talent and also leveraging academic expertise. Working in collaboration with our partners, we can make the science more relevant, meaningful, and useful.

I love working for the USGS. It has a mandate that is neither regulatory nor policymaking but is instead tasked with this critical mission to deliver science that can be used by decision-makers to underpin policy and management decisions with credibility. On matters of science, it is an honest broker and straight shooter, delivering data and analysis about a wide range of hazards and resources.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination and the opportunity it presents to provide leadership to this remarkable organization in pursuing its exciting and important mission. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee might have.