

Scientific Earthquake Studies Advisory Committee

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Dr. Charles G. Groat
Director, U.S. Geological Survey
Mail Stop 100
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
Reston, VA 20192

Dear Director Groat:

Subject: 2004 Annual Report of the Scientific Earthquake Studies
Advisory Committee

Enclosed is our third committee report on the USGS Earthquake Hazards Program for submission to Congress and other interested parties, particularly the NEHRP Advisory Committee.

The Committee met three times in 2004, and identified many challenges, opportunities, and recommendations that are included in our report. However, we believe there are three especially important high-priority recommendations for the USGS Earthquake Hazards Program at this time.

1. The Committee continues to strongly recommend to the Director of the USGS that full funding of the ANSS at the level authorized in the current NEHRP legislation be appropriated. The USGS must make a commitment to work through the Department of the Interior and the Office of Management and Budget to ensure that this objective is met.
2. The Committee supports the USGS efforts to reestablish the National Earthquake Prediction Evaluation Council to serve as the forum to review predictions and resolve scientific debate prior to public controversy or misrepresentation, so decision makers are not misled by unfounded short-term earthquake predictions. The Committee encourages the USGS to support an active NEPEC equipped with adequate resources to perform this role.


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3. The Committee stresses the need for balance in the Earthquake Hazards Program. The USGS must maintain the learning from earthquakes, hazard mapping, earthquake geology, and earthquake physics components of the program. The USGS should not become simply a monitoring agency.

In November, you announced that in 2007, the USGS would be pursuing a natural hazards agenda. The Committee anticipates there will be greater flexibility for the Earthquake Hazards Program in the future, and trusts this will include an enhanced ability to learn from future earthquakes. The occurrence of large earthquakes, such as the recent Sumatra earthquake and tsunami, provides scientists and engineers with unexpected opportunities to study the behavior of dangerous faults and their damaging effects.

We look forward to continued involvement in this important program.

Sincerely,



Lloyd S. Cluff
Chairman

cc: Committee members
David Applegate, USGS, Reston
Mike Blanpied, USGS, Reston
William Leith, USGS, Reston
William Ellsworth, USGS, Menlo Park
Jill McCarthy, USGS, Golden