



**The Arizona Geological Survey: A Small but Important State Agency that Serves the Citizens of Arizona**

**by David F. Briggs**



The Arizona Territory's Office of the Territorial Geologist was created by the United States Congress in 1888. This agency's role of geological mapping and reporting was transferred to the University of Arizona Bureau of Mines in 1893, where it remained until 1915, when the Arizona Bureau of Mines was established at the University of Arizona. Its name was changed to the Arizona Bureau of Geology and Mineral Technology in 1977. The Arizona Bureau

of Geology and Mineral Technology remained a part of the University of Arizona until July 1, 1988, when it became an independent state agency, the Arizona Geological Survey (AZGS).

As an independent state agency, the AZGS has become one of the most innovative, entrepreneurial and highly-respected state geological surveys in America. Its professional staff are internationally recognized leaders in cyber infrastructure and data management in fields of geosciences, global change, natural resources and natural hazards.

The applied science performed by the AZGS is designed to help the layperson solve everyday problems. As Arizona's primary source for information related to earth sciences, the AZGS informs, advises and assists on public issues involving geological processes, materials, landscapes and the prudent use of lands and mineral resources. The AZGS also provides technical expertise and assistance to industry and other state and local government agencies on matters related to mineral and energy resource identification, assessment, and characterization as well as the recognition, mitigation and response to natural hazards such as landslides, debris flows, post-wildfire floods, earth fissures, subsidence, expansive soils and earthquakes.

Since becoming an independent agency in 1988, the AZGS has transitioned from a state-funded agency to one that is primarily funded by external research grants and contracts from federal, state, local and private sponsors. Since 2011, the AZGS has received more than \$35.8 million in external research grants and contracts compared to \$5.36 million received from state appropriations, providing the citizens of Arizona a \$6.68-to-\$1.00 direct return on their investment.

A more detailed list of the AZGS's key duties and accomplishments can be found in the [Arizona Geological Survey Briefing Book](#), which was published in early 2016.

In January 2016, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey released his Proposed Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2017, where he recommended consolidating the AZGS with the University of Arizona. This proposed restructuring of state government has raised concerns among many in the Arizona's geological community, who fear it will severely limit the Arizona Geological Survey's ability to serve the citizens of Arizona. I urge those who will ultimately determine the fate of the Arizona Geological Survey to find a way for it to continue the important work it has done for the citizens of Arizona.

Disclaimer: David F. Briggs is a resident of Pima County and a retired geologist, who has worked for the mining industry.

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