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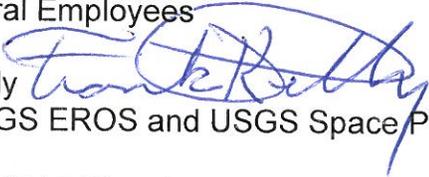
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
National Center for Earth Resources Observation and Science
Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57198

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August 8, 2012

Memorandum

To: EROS Federal Employees

From: Frank P. Kelly 
Director, USGS EROS and USGS Space Policy Advisor

Subject: EROS 2013-2015 Planning

As discussed at the all-hands meeting on July 12, I have been impressed by the depth and breadth of EROS projects, their accomplishments, and future plans. Since January, I have been reflecting on the "Moving Forward: 2010-2015 Strategic Plan for USGS EROS" and its long-term mission goals and objectives and have concluded that the direction EROS has defined is sound.

You have heard me say one of my near-term objectives is to be ready for the 40th anniversary of EROS in August of 2013 with a vision for the Center for the next 40 years. To do this, we must define who we are, what we need to be, and how we will get there. As a follow-up to the all hands meeting and the email of July 16, I would like to share my initial guidance and course of action that we will take to keep the Center moving forward to 2015, while keeping an eye to our longer future.

Over the next 3 years, our EROS mission "contributing to understanding a changing Earth" translates to a need to focus on the following broad areas of responsibility. In response to the Nation's requirements for land change science information and knowledge, we need to be:

- The world's primary source for remotely sensed land images of the Earth;
- World class investigators who understand the condition of the planet's landmasses;
- Providers of definitive land change information and knowledge for the United States and the world;

- Leading the foundational understanding of global environmental change to enable sustainable resource management; and
- The world's land change science experts in understanding how the interactions between people and nature lead to changes in land use, land cover, and land condition.

These key areas of responsibility effectively define the broad functionality for an EROS land change monitoring system. While we have, will continue, and need to invest in each of these five areas, today we have yet to achieve an operational land change monitoring system (terrestrial monitoring system) as envisioned in the EROS Strategic Plan. To evolve to a *bona fide* land change monitoring system, we will need to add focus and discipline to these major responsibilities.

To invest in these responsibilities, over the next 3 years, we will place added focus and discipline on the following five land change monitoring objectives:

- (1) Structured collection and delivery of operational, timely, accurate, and relevant land change information;
- (2) Specific, timely, and reliable assessments of the trends and consequences of land change to support decision makers; and
- (3) Services that support the use and understanding of land change monitoring information products.

Arguably, EROS is already heavily invested in these objectives, but to what measurable degree is still to be defined and evaluated. Without question, we will continue to view, support, and emphasize Landsat as the centerpiece of our land change monitoring system.

Additionally, we will (4) establish a Land Change Assessment and Prediction (LCAP) center. The center will initiate the knowledge component of the land change monitoring system to address how the patterns, processes, and consequences of changes in land use, land cover, and land condition affect people and nature. We will establish the LCAP center within EROS, appoint a director, and staff it with an interdisciplinary team. In doing so, we will tap into the staff expertise available internally and will seek external assistance from leading remote sensing and land change research experts. We will work to involve the Nation's best scientists and engineers as an important step in gaining formal credibility. Therefore, we expect the first permanent LCAP center director to be someone with national and international credentials and visibility.

And, we will (5) invest in and maintain a state-of-the-art land change science information system as a core action fundamental to the success of the LCAP center. The land change science information system investment focuses on the science information aspects of land change monitoring and includes the information architecture, processing, and change detection components of the system. As is our

current practice, all information products are available without restrictions and must be based on calibrated data, peer-reviewed science data processing algorithms, as well as standards or community best practices for determining and reporting product uncertainties.

What will success look like? We will measure and know success when our land change monitoring system products are making positive contributions to our Nation's economic, environmental, and homeland security. Measuring our progress will include setting metrics to track expanding access to information products, requests for services, external applications of our products, and the growth and use of EROS land change scientific publications. We will also monitor increases in the demand for our staff to serve as leaders in national and international science and engineering panels and teams. For EROS staff, success will be job satisfaction and security, increased visibility, pride in contributions to the EROS mission, and realization they are helping to improve the understanding and management of the Earth's resources.

During the next few months, we will hold internal listening sessions to assist in defining a set of guiding principles for FY 2013 and beyond. Details as to purpose and process for the listening sessions will come out in the next few days. The guiding principles will bring focus and clarity to more effectively align our projects and their work with advancing our land change science and land change monitoring goals, and to reduce or eliminate redundant efforts. As well, in August and September, we will develop and issue our Center goals for 2013 that further define the priorities of the five land change monitoring objectives. With these goals and priorities in mind, we will call for milestones from our branches and their projects.

Planning is underway for unbiased, external reviews of our science, information technology, and administrative functions in support of continual business process improvement. We will reach decisions about leadership and project management through collaboration and consultation with numerous people who represent EROS, our community, and our stakeholders.

Planning for our global land change monitoring system requires a carefully selected, relevant, and top quality set of products and services. In addition, we require focused teamwork to build and operate those capabilities. Our current team effort stretching across science, data management, remote sensing systems and business processes will continue to evolve in support of our vision. Our mission, contributing to understanding a changing Earth, is clear and relevant. Our mission is consistent with the USGS vision to provide "science for a changing world." Now is the time, as we proceed with planning for 2013-2015, to take actions that clearly define how global land change monitoring will elevate EROS to higher levels of service to the Nation and around the globe. It is critical, regardless of role or process, for each of us to take these

objectives and expectations into consideration as we set near- and mid-term career and program/project goals.

We are committed to developing and operating a world-class global land change monitoring, assessment, and prediction system. We fully recognize we have much work ahead. Our exciting journey ahead will no doubt have many challenges, transitions, and opportunities. We will work through them together. When we open our doors for our 40th Anniversary Celebration in 2013, we will have a vision and a plan for where we want EROS to be in 2053.

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cc: DO CHRON

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