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NPC Report Calls for National Cooperative Subsurface Assessment Program

1 SEPTEMBER 2026

EDITED BY: HALEY MCQUEEN



Leaders from state government, Tribal organizations, industry, scientists, and academia recommended urgent action to strengthen America's understanding of its subsurface resources with the release of *American Resources for a Secure Future: A National Cooperative Subsurface Assessment*.

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(Image credit: The National Petroleum Council)

National Petroleum Council (NPC) Chair and ConocoPhillips Chairman and CEO Ryan Lance announced the new report, the latest in NPC's Future Energy Systems series requested by US Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, to address rising demand for secure domestic energy and mineral resources.



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Developed by roughly 80 experts and approved by a decision of the full NPC membership, the study finds that the American subsurface—the source of the nation's oil and gas, coal, essential minerals, geothermal energy, geologic hydrogen, and subsurface storage resources—remains one of the country's most under-characterized strategic assets.

The NPC delivered nine specific recommendations, leading to an overarching vision of an authorized and **Don't miss the headlines.** on NPR's top news, every week. NPC's National Cooperative Subsurface Assessment Program that builds on existing federal and state agency authorities. These specific recommendations call on Congress, academia,

industry, and federal and state agencies to:

1. Accelerate holistic assessments of the nation's subsurface resources
2. Prioritize assessments of emerging resources
3. Acquire priority baseline data to strengthen subsurface assessments
4. Develop a National Data Portal to ease access to subsurface data
5. Recover and preserve legacy subsurface data
6. Evaluate access to proprietary data acquired by industry
7. Increase development of emerging technology for subsurface resource extraction, mapping, and modeling
8. Establish a collaborative, long-term planning process
9. Develop a qualified workforce for subsurface analysis through residencies and partnerships

"America has tremendous resource potential beneath our feet, and those resources play a critical role in our economy, our energy security and our ability to lead in advanced manufacturing to remain competitive for the long term," NPC Chair Ryan Lance said. "This report lays out a practical framework for building a more complete understanding of our subsurface resources and strengthening the nation's ability to identify and support future resource development. I thank Secretary Wright for commissioning this work and the many contributors who brought their expertise to bear."

The report, *American Resources for a Secure Future: A National Cooperative Subsurface Assessment Program* (<https://american-resources.npc.org>), details that more than 80 percent of America's energy needs—and the essential feedstocks that power domestic manufacturing, infrastructure, defense, and advanced technologies—come from beneath US soil. Yet much of the nation's subsurface has not been systematically assessed in decades, leaving policymakers, industry, and communities without a shared, modern picture of the resources available to meet growing demand. The study calls for a federal coordinated, cooperative program uniting efforts at the US Geological Survey (USGS), Marine Minerals Administration (MMA), and DOE with state geological surveys, Tribal governments, industry, academia, and other organizations to

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modernize resource data, prioritize subsurface regions of national significance, and equip the country to make informed decisions on energy, critical minerals, and subsurface storage capacity.

“You can’t manage what you haven’t measured,” said Dr. Scott Tinker, Director Emeritus of the Bureau of Economic Geology at The University of Texas at Austin and cochair of the American Resources report. “For decades, we’ve made decisions about America’s energy and mineral future with an incomplete picture of what’s beneath the surface. This report lays out a practical, cooperative path to fix that with industry, government, Tribal nations, and academia at the same table.”

“No state can comprehensively characterize a geologic basin or ore body that crosses its borders working alone, and no federal agency can do this work without the state and Tribal partners who know the ground,” added Dr. Berry H. “Nick” Tew, Jr., State Geologist of Alabama and Director of the Geological Survey of Alabama, who also cochaired the report. “A cooperative program anchored by USGS and MMA working hand-in-hand with DOE, state geological surveys, Tribes, industry, and academia is the right model, and it’s overdue.”

“Experts across the breadth of the energy and subsurface resource community reached consensus on what America needs and how to deliver it,” said John Dabbar, Executive Director of NPC. “The nine recommendations we’re delivering to Secretary Wright are specific, actionable, and ready to implement. If enacted through the appropriate policy, legislation, and regulation, these recommendations will help government understand and manage the nation’s subsurface resources and enable effective private-sector development. This is a nonpartisan subject; the rocks don’t care about surface borders.”

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