

1 Supporting Statement for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission Part A

Mineral Resources External Research Program (MRERP)

OMB Control Number: 1028-NEW

Terms of Clearance: None.

Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

Laws, Regulations and Statutes

- Organic Act of March 3, 1879 (43 U.S.C. 31 et seq)
- Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131)
- Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (16 U.S.C. 3141 et seq)
- National Materials and Mineral Policy, Research and Development Act of 1980 (30 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.)

The responsibility of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) for minerals information and research has evolved considerably since the Organic Act of March 3, 1879 (43 U.S.C. 31 et seq) established the USGS and defined its role as *classification of the public lands, and examination of the geological structure, mineral resources, and products of the national domain*. The Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131), the National Materials and Mineral Policy, Research and Development Act of 1980 (30 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (16 U.S.C. 3141 et seq) authorize and encourage the Secretary of the Interior and the USGS to be informed about and to assess the mineral resources of the Nation. The responsibilities regarding mineral resources are discharged by the Department of the Interior through a staff of USGS scientists and assigned to the Mineral Resources Program (MRP).

In its 2003 review of the USGS MRP, the National Research Council identified four Federal roles in mineral science and engineering: (1) an unbiased national source of science and information, (2) basic research on mineral resources, (3) advisory, and (4) international (undertaking or supporting international activities that are in the national interest). The MRP addresses these four roles through work in two functions: a research and assessment function that provides information for land planners and decisionmakers about where mineral commodities are known and suspected in the Earth's crust, and a minerals information function that collects, analyzes, and disseminates data that describe current production and consumption of about 100 mineral commodities, both domestically and internationally for approximately 180 countries. Together these activities provide information ranging from that required for land planning decisions on specific management units to that required for national and international economic decisions.

In 2004, the MRP introduced the Mineral Resources External Research Program (MRERP). This is a grant and/or cooperative agreement opportunity available to individuals, universities, State and tribal agencies, industry, or other private sector organizations that have the ability to conduct research in topics related to non-fuel mineral resources that meet the long-term goals of the Mineral Resources Program. The MRERP requires that research proposals be submitted for evaluation by a review panel. The review panel is necessary to rank the merit of submitted proposals for final determination of grant award funding.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

The MRERP will use Standard Forms: 424 Application for Federal Assistance; 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs; and 424B Assurances Non-Construction Programs. Applicants will submit proposals for funding in response to Notices of Funding Availability (NOFA) that we publish on Grants.gov and our program web pages. Applicants submit a proposal through Grants.gov. We collect the following information for each application:

- (1) The proposal narrative including the primary investigator's contact information, applicant organization, collaborating organizations, a short description of the project, the project scope, the technical approach, the skills and capabilities of the applicant, the commitment to the effort, and the organizational and managerial capacity.
- (2) Proposed budget breakdown that provides detailed information about how the funds will be utilized.
- (3) Letters of support and/or commitment that are used to demonstrate the project's viability.
- (4) Complete Standard Forms 424, 424a, and 424b

All research proposals must meet two qualifying criteria to qualify for funding consideration.

Criterion 1: The proposed work must be research; a systematic inquiry to generate new knowledge about a subject of investigation, through a process of interpretation. Data collection and compilation are important early steps in a research project, but do not, alone, constitute research.

Criterion 2: The proposed research must address one of the long-term goals of the MRP, as defined in the MRP Five-Year plan for FY 2006-2010 (http://minerals.usgs.gov/plan/2006-2010/2006-2010_plan.html). These are:

- Long-term goal 1: Ensure availability of up-to-date quantitative assessments of potential for undiscovered mineral deposits
- Long-term goal 2: Ensure availability of up-to-date geoenvironmental assessments of priority Federal lands
- Long-term goal 3: Ensure availability of reliable geologic, geochemical, geophysical, and mineral locality data for the United States
- Long-term goal 4: Ensure availability of long-term data sets describing mineral production and consumption

Each year the MRERP designates selected research topics as priority for support. For 2009, the MRERP will solicit research proposals that (1) will improve our assessment for concealed mineral resources in general, or (2) will contribute to accurate and comprehensive mineral deposit or mineral environmental models for deposit types, known or expected to be found in the United States, that are important sources of the following commodities (listed in alphabetical order):

• beryllium	• chromium	• cobalt	• iron	• lithium
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• manganese	• nickel	• phosphate	• platinum-group metals	• potash
• rare earths	• titanium and TiO ₂	• uranium		

The information collected above ensures that sufficient and relevant information is available to evaluate and select proposals for funding. A panel of technical experts will review each proposal to assess how well the proposed project addresses the requirements and priorities identified in the program’s announcement.

All awards granted under this program have a reporting requirement of a final technical report (performance report and copies of all deliverables) and final financial statements due at the end of the performance period.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology; e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden [and specifically how this collection meets GPEA requirements].

All proposals are submitted electronically via Grants.gov. Application instructions and forms are available on the Internet for filling and printing by the public. All reports are submitted electronically.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.

Due to the unique nature of this program and authorizing legislation no other Federal agency collects this information. No duplication will occur.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

We have made efforts to keep the amount of information requested to a minimum for all of our applicants. The information has to be sufficient to fulfill the requirements of the authorizing statutes, as well as sufficient to make a competitive funding decision. We do not believe the amount of information requested will have a significant impact on small entities, as they will be providing the minimum amount of information needed to compete for financial assistance under these programs.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently; as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

Failure to collect the information or collecting the information less frequently would reduce the MRP’s ability to work with external partners to conduct research needed to manage the mineral resources of the nation as mandated by DOI.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner: (i) requiring respondents to report more often than quarterly, (ii) requiring respondents prepare written responses in fewer than 30 days after receipt, (iii) requiring

respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document, (iv) retain records for more than 3 years; (v) in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study; (vi) the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB; (vii) that includes a pledge of confidentiality not supported by authority established in statute or regulation; requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets or other confidential information.

There are no circumstances that require us to collect the information in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency’s notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8 (d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice [and in response to the PRA statement associated with the collection over the past three years] and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden. Describe efforts to consult with persons outside of the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed or reported [Please list the names, titles, addresses, and phone numbers of persons contacted.] Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years—even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

On June 6, 2008, we published a Federal Register notice (73 FR 32353) announcing that we would submit this collection to OMB for approval. The notice provided a 60-day public comment period ending on August 5, 2008. We did not receive any comments in response to the notice.

In addition to our Federal Register notice, we solicited comments from several former applicants about the clarity of instruction, the annual hour burden for the application materials and final reports. The names and addresses of the people we contacted are listed below.

Names, Titles, Addresses, and Phone Numbers of Individuals Contacted Outside the Agency

Mark D. Barton, Professor Dept of Geosciences University of Arizona Tucson, AZ 85721-0077 520-621-8529	Jean S. Cline, Professor Dept of Geosciences University of Nevada Las Vegas Las Vegas, NV, 89154-4010 702-895-1091	Virginia S. Gillerman, Associate Research Geologist Idaho Geological Survey Boise, ID 83702 208-332-4420
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All respondents said that: (1) the proposal narrative instructions are clear, succinct, and to the point; (2) evaluation criteria are clearly laid out; and (3) the approach is simple to follow. Professor Cline suggested that the proposal narrative is generally well written and provides detailed specific instructions that, with patience, can lead to a well-written proposal. It was noted that evaluation criteria and point system provided are particularly helpful in guiding proposal preparation.

Proposal Narrative

Reviewer Barton estimated the time to complete the narrative process including relevant communication

would be 60 hours. Gillerman said that the completion of the proposal narrative probably would take her about four weeks, working half-time on it, or about 80 hours. Cline did not suggest the burden in hours, but provided that they would spend 15-20 days working on the proposal.

We believe that this variance results from the time it takes each applicant to gather information they need to prepare the narrative, write the narrative, and the time that it takes to receive supporting feedback (i.e. peer-reviews and letters of support). Based on these responses and our prior experience with similar collections, we carefully considered adjusting our estimated burden times. We averaged the time reported by the reviewers [we converted Cline’s working days into an average of 140 hours assuming an 8-hour work day]. Based on the average of the three reviews plus our previous estimate [45 hours – amount in our 60-day Federal Register notice], we believe the burden to complete the application (proposal narrative) is approximately 81 hours.

Final Report

Barton provided an estimate of 20 hours (assumes that much of the technical content is presented in other forms such as manuscripts, theses, databases, etc. – with attendant time commitments to those) needed to complete the final report. Cline said that it would take approximately 10 days or about 80 hours to prepare the final report. Reviewer Gillerman stated, “...*the completion of the final technical report is very time-consuming but admittedly necessary for any scientific work. I estimate about 300-400 hours [38-50 days] just on the writing portion and some graphics development. That does not include time spent getting data collected into a compiled form.*”

The variance in the time to complete the final report is likely based on the level of perceived complexity needed to report findings. We agree with Barton’s comments that the final report could be considered to be a part of another compilation to be submitted as a publication to another outlet. According to our announcement, preprints of articles submitted for publications will be accepted as final reports. Therefore, we conclude that a burden of 45 hours to prepare a final report that could be considered as a dual publication is generous and acceptable.

We anticipate awarding an average of 5 grants per year; each award recipient is required to submit a final technical report. We estimate a burden of 45 hours to complete and submit each final report (totaling 225 hours).

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

No payments or gifts are other than the remuneration of grantees.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

No assurance of confidentiality is given to respondents. We will protect information from respondents considered proprietary under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552) and implementing regulations (43 CFR part 2), and under regulations at 30 CFR 250.197, “Data and information to be made available to the public or for limited inspection.” We intend to release the project abstracts and primary investigators for awarded/funded projects only.

11. Provide additional justification for questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

The MRERP application does not ask for information of a sensitive nature.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

Our estimates are based on our own knowledge plus the outreach described in item 8. We expect to receive approximately 35 applications, each taking the applicant approximately 81 hours to complete. This includes the time for project conception and development, proposal writing and reviewing, and submitting proposal narrative through Grants.gov (totaling 2,835 burden hours). We anticipate awarding an average of 5 grants per year. The award recipients must submit a final technical report. We estimate that it will take approximately 45 hours to complete and submit each report (totaling 225 hours). We estimate that the total burden for this collection will be 3,060 hours (Table 1).

Table 1. Estimated annual hour burden of the collection of information

Activity	Number of Annual Responses	Estimated Completion Time per Response	Total Annual Burden Hours
Application	35	81	2,835
Final Report	5	45	225
TOTAL	40		3,060

We estimate an aggregated annual cost to the respondents to be \$94,396 (see Table 2). The hour cost is based on BLS news release USDL 07-1883 of December 11, 2007, for average full compensation per hour including benefits for private industry. The particular values utilized are:

- Individuals. Average hourly wage is \$19.29 multiplied by 1.4 to account for benefits (\$27.01).
- Private sector. Average hourly wage is \$18.56 multiplied by 1.4 to account for benefits (\$25.98).
- States/tribal/local governments. Average hourly wage is \$23.99 multiplied by 1.5 to account for benefits (\$35.99).

Table 2. Estimated Dollar Value of Annual Burden Hours

Activity	Annual Number of Responses	Estimated Completion Time per Response	Total Annual Burden Hours	Dollar Value of Burden Hour Including Benefits	Total Dollar Value of Annual Burden Hours
Narrative Preparation					
Individuals	2	81	162	\$27.01	\$4,376
Private Sector	16	81	1,296	\$25.98	\$33,670
State Local/Tribal Gov.	17	81	1,377	\$35.99	\$49,558
SUBTOTAL	35		0		0
Final Reports					
Individuals	1	45	45	\$27.01	\$,1215
Private Sector	2	45	90	\$25.98	\$2,338

State Local/Tribal Gov.	2	45	90	\$35.99	\$3,239
SUBTOTAL	5		0		0
TOTAL	40		3,060		\$94,396

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual [non-hour] cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 and 14).

There is no non-hour cost burden to applicants under this collection. There is no fee for applications, nor any fees associated with application requirements.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

The total estimated cost to the Federal Government for processing and reviewing information received as a result of this collection is \$25,876 (Table 3). This includes Federal employee salaries and benefits. The table below shows Federal staff and grade levels performing various tasks associated with this information collection. We used the Office of Personnel Management Salary Table 2008-DCB (<http://www.opm.gov/oca/08tables/html/dcb.asp>) to determine the hourly rate. We multiplied the hourly rate by 1.5 to account for benefits (as implied by the previously referenced BLS news release).

The Administrative Assistant will provide applicants assistance when help is requested, download the applications, and provide the applications to the MRERP Coordinator. The MRERP Coordinator will complete the application initial review process to consider the completeness of documentation and basic eligibility. Two USGS review panel members and four non-Federal specialists will evaluate remaining eligible proposals. Each proposal is evaluated and scored using narrative evaluation factors. Finally, the slate of selected proposals will be submitted to the MRERP Coordinator for final approval. The MRERP Coordinator will serve as reviewer of the final reports submitted by the five grantees.

Table 3. Federal Employee Salaries and Benefits

Number of Responses	Position	Grade/ Step	Hourly Rate	Hourly Rate incl. benefits (1.5 x hourly pay rate)	Estimated Time per Response (hours)	Est. Cost per Response	Annual Cost
35	Administrative Assistant	GS-7/5	21.36	32.04	.50	16.02	\$561
40	MRERP Coordinator	GS-15/5	62.62	93.93	3.5	328.75	\$13,150
35	USGS Review Panel Member	GS-15/5	62.62	93.93	2	187.86	\$6,575
35	USGS Review Panel Member	GS14/5	53.24	79.86	2	159.72	\$5,590
Estimated Total Cost to Federal Government							0

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments.

This is a new request.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication.

We will maintain data on proposals and resulting grant awards in a database. The final technical reports will be posted on the MRERP website - <http://minerals.usgs.gov/mrerp/reports.html>

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

Not applicable. We will display the expiration date.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions".

We are requesting no exceptions to the certification statement.