



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Reston, VA 20192



In Reply Refer To:
Mail Stop 904

July 15, 2009

Mr. Nathan Frey
Department of the Interior Desk Officer
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. Frey:

The US Geological Survey (USGS) is requesting emergency approval and permission to waive the requirements to publish Federal Register notices for information collection associated with the Volcano Hazards Program (VHP). This is a new grant program, which uses American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding (part of ARRA Project RA02-00V).

The USGS feels that expediting the normal PRA process and making stimulus funds available more quickly are justifiable in this situation and follow the spirit of the ARRA. The USGS is seeking emergency approval by July 31, 2009, so that we can begin the process to solicit proposals. If you approve this emergency request, we will immediately publish a 60-day notice and seek regular OMB approval for this information collection.

Background

The total funding for ARRA Project RA02-00V, Volcano Monitoring, is set at \$15.2M to be distributed among six tasks, each of which also has established funding levels. The main goal of the project is to modernize existing volcano-monitoring networks in regions of the United States with potential hazards from volcanic activity. Funding for cooperative agreements is provided through one subtask in each of five of the six tasks, and funding levels for these subtasks have also been established internally, totaling approximately \$7.8M.

Applicants to the VHP ARRA program announcement for cooperative agreements will propose work to accomplish the following: 1) upgrade seismic monitoring and hazard-warning networks in Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, and Yellowstone; 2) improve the ability to forecast the distribution of hazardous volcanic gases on Hawaii; 3) develop software tools for improved interpretation of information from volcano monitoring instruments; 4) develop hazard assessments and mitigation strategies with local communities around hazardous volcanoes; 5) produce high-resolution, laser-generated topographic maps of areas around hazardous volcanoes for hazard assessment and mitigation; and 6) study past volcanic deposits for insights into potential future volcanic behavior.

It is estimated that 12 applications will receive funding. All funds must be distributed by September 30, 2010, and all work must be completed by September 30, 2011. To begin awarding these grants this fiscal year, we must publish the Notice of Funding Availability on Grants.gov as soon as possible.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact Phadrea Ponds, Information Collection Clearance Officer, US Geological Survey, at 970-226-9445.

Sincerely,

William C. Burton
Associate Program Coordinator
Volcano Hazards Program