

Corri A. Feige
Commissioner



Department of
Natural Resources

www.DNR.Alaska.Gov

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: December 3, 2019

Presidential directive will boost DGGS' Alaska coastal mapping

(Anchorage, AK) – President Donald J. Trump's recent decision to prioritize mapping of Arctic and nearshore coastal areas will advance ongoing state efforts to survey and document Alaska's coastal conditions, resources and hazards, the director of the Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys (DGGS) said today.

The Presidential Memorandum issued Nov. 19 establishes mapping of the coast and undersea areas within the nation's 200-mile offshore Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ) as a national priority, reflecting its importance and value to the nation.

"The U.S. EEZ contains a vast array of underutilized, and likely many undiscovered, natural resources, including critical minerals, marine-derived pharmaceuticals, energy, and areas of significant ecological and conservation value," the president wrote. "However, only about 40 percent of the U.S. EEZ has been mapped."

DGGS Director Steve Masterman says the memorandum's call for thorough coastal mapping dovetails neatly with -- and should bring more focus and resources to bear on -- an important part of DGGS' mission.

"Much of the rest of the country's coastline has already been mapped and is on schedule to be remapped every five years, but Alaska's coastline hasn't been mapped even once," he said. "As the Arctic is emerging in importance both economically and strategically, its welcome, but not surprising, that mapping our vast coastline and the EEZ are of national importance."

With activity within the EEZ accounting for \$300 billion in economic activity, 3 million jobs and \$129 billion in wages nationally, the benefits of accurate mapping information are as clear as the inadequate state of data on Alaska's shores, Masterman said.

(MORE)

DGGS coastal mapping

DGGS's coastal hazards program currently coordinates closely with federal programs in mapping high-priority coastal areas to identify factors that affect nearby communities. The new federal policy will focus will strengthen that relationship, and let the state work more closely with the federal government to address state priorities, including erosion and flooding issues, and resource development, he said.

The Presidential Memorandum directs the Alaska Mapping Executive Committee, a joint federal-state body, to help NOAA develop a strategy for mapping Alaska's shoreline and nearshore that could bring Alaska more federal resources for the work, Masterman said.

AMEC has already been working to identify data gaps, identify priority areas for mapping topography, bathymetry, imagery and shoreline, and outline a strategy for working with state and federal agencies to map the priority areas. The priority areas were identified by a survey of more than 40 individuals and representatives of state, federal and local governments, Native corporations and associations, non-profit and professional organizations, and academic institutions.

Mapping methods that could be used in the mapping work include satellite and aerial imagery, water-penetrating LiDAR (light detection and ranging) to map shallow marine, intertidal and coastal zones, side-scan sonar to measure offshore seabed topography, and sampling of the seafloor for mineral potential, Masterman said. DGGS has documented the current state of knowledge on Alaska's coastal areas in Informational Circular 72, available at: <http://dggs.alaska.gov/pubs/id/30096>

DGGS's mission includes assessing the state for mineral and energy resources, collecting data to help engineers reduce threats from geologic hazards, publishing maps and reports on Alaska's geology and natural resources, studying volcanic, seismic and associated hazards, and maintaining the state's collection of geologic samples to support resource exploration and research.

The Presidential Memorandum is at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/memorandum-ocean-mapping-united-states-exclusive-economic-zone-shoreline-nearshore-alaska/>. Information on the state's Coastal Mapping Strategic Plan is available at: <http://agc.dnr.alaska.gov/coastal.html>

CONTACT: Steve Masterman, (907) 451-5007, steve.masterman@alaska.gov

###