

# Obama picks veteran scientist to lead USGS

**Phil Taylor, Environment & Energy Publishing, 1-10-14**

President Obama yesterday nominated Suzette Kimball to lead the U.S. Geological Survey, the government's premier science agency.

Kimball, a 15-year veteran of the \$1.1 billion agency, is currently deputy director and has been serving as acting director since the retirement of Marcia McNutt last February.

If confirmed, Kimball would oversee a staff of 8,000 in more than 400 locations nationwide. The agency is in charge of conducting scientific research and minimizing loss of life from natural disasters, among other tasks.

"USGS brings critical, impartial information to bear on some of the most complex issues facing our nation today -- from the impacts of climate change to natural hazards and their threats," said Interior Secretary Sally Jewell. "During her time at USGS, Suzette has proven herself to be a smart, thoughtful and collaborative leader, and a strong advocate for using science to inform our understanding of our world and provide tools to solve natural resource challenges."

Kimball's nomination represents one on the final pieces of Obama's second-term team at Interior, which oversees energy development, conservation and recreation on the nation's lands and waters.

Nominees for other top Interior posts, including deputy secretary, assistant secretaries and director of the Bureau of Land Management, are pending before the Senate.

Obama has yet to announce nominees for the Bureau of Reclamation, Interior inspector general and the National Indian Gaming Commission.

Kimball came to USGS in 1998 as Eastern regional executive for biology. She became director of the Eastern Region in 2004 and associate director for geology in 2008.

Since 2010, when she was promoted to deputy director, Kimball led USGS's international activities and represented all North American geological surveys on international mapping endeavors, Interior said.

In summer 2012, Kimball was also named Interior's top official for scientific integrity, a position that took on new importance under Obama's renewed focus on keeping politics out of government research.

"I personally believe that being able to point to high standards of scientific integrity is what makes the science robust," she said at the time. "Our challenge is to be consistent and be diligent in following through on all issues that come to the table that do involve scientific integrity issues. We have to be absolutely consistent in following our policies."

Prior to coming to USGS, Kimball was the National Park Service's Southeast associate regional director in Atlanta and regional chief scientist from 1993 to 1998. She previously served as a research coordinator for the Park Service's global climate change program.

She has also led research at the Army Corps of Engineers and at the University of Virginia.

Kimball has a bachelor's degree in English from the College of William & Mary, a master's degree in geology and geophysics from Ball State University, and a doctorate in environmental sciences/coastal and oceanographic process from the University of Virginia.

She has also authored numerous publications on barrier island dynamics; coastal ecosystem science; coastal zone management and policy; and natural resource exploration, evaluation and management, according to her agency biography.

Kimball would replace McNutt, who since 2009 oversaw the reorganization of the agency, development of the ground systems needed for the Earth-imaging satellite Landsat 8 and establishment of advanced scientific integrity standards.

McNutt also was instrumental during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill response.

Obama yesterday also said he plans to nominate Jerilyn Mendoza to the Joint Public Advisory Committee of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, which supports cooperation among North American Free Trade Agreement countries to address environmental issues of continental concern.

The JPAC consists of five citizens each from Canada, the United States and Mexico and is funded in part by U.S. EPA.

For the past month, Mendoza has served as senior environmental affairs program manager at the Southern California Gas Co., and for two years she was a commissioner of the Los Angeles Board of Public Works.

She was policy director and staff attorney at the Environmental Defense Fund of Los Angeles from 2000 to 2009.