



the Almanac

News of Atherton, Menlo Park, Portola Valley and Woodside

Loss of USGS would affect 1,000 local employees

Local observers view seriously the threat by Republicans to abolish the U.S. Geological Survey, which has its Western Region headquarters in Menlo Park.

By MARION SOFTKY

It's hard to think of Menlo Park without the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

For almost 40 years, the 17-acre campus on Middlefield Road has been home to scientists who warned us about earthquakes and landslides, studied our water supplies, searched out oil, gas and minerals, and provided maps for everyone from highway builders to backpackers.

Some 1,000 employees are our friends and neighbors; they own homes, attend churches, volunteer their time for good causes, bike to work, and serve on city councils and community committees.

Now, as part of the massive restructuring of government that the new Republican majority is pushing, USGS may evaporate, its functions farmed out to private industry and other government agencies, or dropped entirely.

"We view this as a serious threat," said George Gryc, a 50-year veteran of USGS who serves as representative for the director for the Western Region, headquartered in Menlo Park. This com-

PAGE 7: A tar-paper shack at the USGS in Menlo Park is named a national historic landmark.

prises six western states plus Alaska and Hawaii.

"It's a great mistake," added Dr. Lynn Orr, dean of Earth Sciences at Stanford. "The USGS produces information of great value to the nation and California in particular."

The proposal to abolish the USGS for a five-year savings of \$3.3 billion originated from a two-page list of possible cuts presented by Republicans scrambling to offset the costs of their Contract with America. The 10-point program seeks to balance the budget, give tax relief and expand military spending. The new Republicans promise a vote on all 10 points within the first 100 days of the next session.

This is just a list of options; it's not binding, said Bruce Cuthbertson, press secretary to Rep. John Kasich, R-Ohio, who is expected to be the new chairman of the House Budget Committee. Also on the list prepared by the Republican staff



George Hargrove, manager of facilities and administration for the Western Region of the U.S. Geological Survey, stands in front of the skeleton of a new \$40 million research building rising on Middlefield Road.

PHOTO BY MARION SOFTKY

of the House Budget Committee are goodies like having the federal government take over Hetch Hetchy, abolish the Bureau of Mines and eliminate the Interstate Commerce Commission. "If anyone else has suggestions, we would like to hear them," Mr. Cuthbertson said.

Rep. Kasich has tried for several

years to dump the USGS but has been voted down.

Battle lines are forming. "Identifying dangerous faults and preventing buildings from collapsing is not wasteful spending," said Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Atherton.

"The public depends on these services. This type of fiscal assault on public safety is irresponsible."

Mr. Cuthbertson suggested, "We may be able to fold earthquake monitoring into the National Science Foundation."

Dr. Orr responded: "That's crazy. The National Science Foundation doesn't do any research. They make grants but they don't operate any research programs." (Continued on Page 7)