

House Natural Resource Committee

June 25, 2026

Mineral Resources

Highlights:

The hearing on the House Natural Resources / Energy and Mineral Resources on Earth MRI Resource Potential focused on the [U.S. Geological Survey's Earth Mapping Resources Initiative \(Earth MRI\)](#) and its role in strengthening the nation's understanding of domestic mineral resources. While Tribal issues were not the central topic, the hearing recognized Tribes as key partners and stakeholders in the use and governance of Earth MRI data.

Key points:

- Members from both parties emphasized that the program provides critical geologic, geophysical, and geochemical data needed to identify and evaluate mineral deposits essential for economic growth, energy production, and national security. Witnesses described Earth MRI as a foundational, “pre-competitive” data program that reduces risk for private investment, supports scientific research, and informs land management decisions.
- The hearing also highlighted the program's broad benefits beyond mining, including applications for groundwater management, natural hazard assessment, geothermal energy development, and infrastructure planning.
- A central theme was the need to reauthorize and sustain funding for Earth MRI as current authorizations and supplemental funding expire, with many members noting its strong return on investment, contributions to workforce development, and role in helping the U.S. compete globally—particularly against countries like China that dominate critical mineral supply chains.
- Earth MRI was described as a collaborative program that includes partnerships with Tribes alongside states, universities, and industry, and provides publicly accessible data that Tribal governments can use for resource management, infrastructure planning, and environmental protection.
- Witnesses and members noted that Tribes actively use Earth MRI data in decision-making and that the program supports Tribal sovereignty by allowing Tribes to determine whether and how data are collected on their lands.
- There were also examples of direct collaboration, such as working with Tribes on groundwater studies and joint efforts—like partnerships with the Quapaw Nation—to evaluate legacy mine waste and resource recovery. Additionally, members emphasized the importance of respecting Tribal sovereignty, protecting cultural resources, and ensuring meaningful Tribal consultation when considering future mineral development.