



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement of Research & Technology Subcommittee Chairwoman Barbara Comstock (R-Va.)
NEON Warning Signs: Examining the Management of the National Ecological Observatory Network.

Chairwoman Comstock: In August, the National Science Foundation informed the Committee that the National Ecological Observatory Network project, known as NEON, was on trajectory to be \$80 million over budget and 18 months behind schedule.

NSF also notified the Committee that it was taking immediate action to de-scope the project and institute other corrective actions to keep it on time and on budget, in accordance with the no-cost overrun policy that the Foundation has had in place since 2009.

To put this in perspective, \$80 million is about 20% of the project's \$433 million construction budget - a project that is supposed to be in its final year of construction in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2016.

In today's hearing, I want to learn more about how NEON has gotten so far off track, why the overrun was not caught sooner, and look at what corrective actions both NSF and NEON intend to take to complete the project. I also want to review NSF's proposed plans for scaling back the project and understand what impact it will have on the scientific value of the network.

We have a constitutional obligation and responsibility to ensure every dollar intended for scientific research is spent as effectively and efficiently as possible. Every dollar wasted on mismanagement, is a dollar that could be spent on groundbreaking basic research or training future scientists.

This is not the first time the Committee has looked at the serious problems, which seem to have plagued NEON. We need to better understand what went wrong so we can determine what steps, including new legislation or regulations, must be taken to ensure these problems never happen again.

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