

### Event overview

The U.S. Group on Earth Observations ([USGEO](#)) is a Federal interagency body hosted by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Co-chaired by NASA, NOAA, and USGS, USGEO provides a forum for over a dozen Federal agencies and departments to share knowledge and coordinate activities around how Earth observations (public/private, domestic/international) are collected, used, and shared. Similarly, USGEO Co-Chair agencies NASA, NOAA, and USGS lead U.S. multi-agency support of the international Group on Earth Observations ([GEO](#)), which coordinates Earth observation campaigns and policies globally.



On Friday, July 26, 2024, at 10:00 am ET, USGEO convened a session entitled “[New Earth observation strategies and directions for USGEO, GEO, and U.S. Federal agencies](#)” at the annual Earth System Information Partners (ESIP) summer [meeting](#), held in Asheville, North Carolina, July 23-26, 2024. The 90-minute session provided an overview of the objectives, structure, functioning, and activities of USGEO, AmeriGEO and GEO, provided insight into the Earth observations activities of the co-chair agencies and those of related external partners and international coordination groups, and discussed the activities and future directions of GEO. It also sought to better understand how the ESIP community does, or would like to, engage with USGEO, GEO, and the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) and to capture new ideas and open questions from the ESIP community. The following three talks (60 minutes) were followed by a panel discussion (30 minutes) with the audience.

- *Group on Earth Observations (GEO) Post-2025 Strategy: Earth Intelligence for All - Empowering Informed Decision Making through Equitable Access to Actionable Data and Information* (Katy Matthews, NOAA)
- *New EO Strategies and Directions: What Can USGS, USGEO, and CEOS Do For You? (And What You Could Do For Them!)* (Tim Stryker, USGS)
- *NASA Earth: New Earth Observation Strategies and Directions* (Katie Baynes, NASA)

As the dialogue with the audience of about 60 participants illustrates the needs and concerns of the ESIP community, we capture the audience’s contributions below. The major theme emerging from the discussion was a strong desire for avenues for meaningful engagement and clear strategies for dealing effectively with the changing data landscape. Speaker bios are also below, and a recording of the session can be viewed [here](#).

### Speaker Bios

**Katy Matthews** serves as the Group on Earth Observations (GEO)/Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) Team Lead in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Satellite and Information Service International and Interagency Affairs Division. She has worked with NOAA for 20-plus years with a background in international affairs, communications, and team development. She spent 2010-2022 at the National Centers for Environmental Information in Asheville, NC.

**Tim Stryker** is Chief of the Outreach and Collaboration Branch of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) National Land Imaging Program. He works closely with internal and external stakeholders to advance the societal benefit of space-based and airborne land imaging systems. Mr. Stryker was previously employed as Director of the U.S. Group on Earth Observations Program at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, where he coordinated civil Earth observation activities, including systems assessments and data management initiatives, among multiple Federal agencies and their international partners.

**Katie Baynes** is the Earth Data Officer for NASA’s Earth Science Data Systems. She was formerly a Systems Architect for NASA’s Earth Observing System Data and Information System (EOSDIS) and has spent much of the past decade leading teams working on large-scale Earth Science ingest, archive, and distribution systems.

**Pamela Collins** (moderator) is the Senior Advisor for Interagency & International Affairs in the Earth Action Program at NASA Headquarters. She supports coordination of NASA’s engagement with the global Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and USGEO.



### Audience/Panel discussion

#### Questions we posed to the audience, and their responses:

- Are there any aspects of the GEO community you are already involved in? If so, which, and what do you do with them?
  - o As a NASA employee I learned that I am a part of GEO community.
  - o DSWG--Bob Downs is co-chair. Also involved in Disaster Risk WG.
  - o I have been invited to speak but no feedback received.
  - o ESIP has a rep and alternate on GEO Program Board.
  - o Federated search.
  - o Not geo specifically but I am part of CEOS WGISS.
  - o GEO policy coordination.
  - o Not directly involved, but have supported some of the data-related activities.
  - o Active in Human Planet Initiative and EO4SDGs initiative.
  - o None, first time learning about USGEO/GEO (5 instances).
- What needs, if any, are you aware of in your spheres of activity where the GEO community might be able to help you?
  - o Work with NOAA for improved data hygiene and informing researchers of FAIR/CARE.
  - o Could provide a place to provide input.
  - o International perspectives on interoperability and decision making.
  - o Broaden international stakeholder/user interactions.
  - o The non-Federal parts of ESIP have interest in international engagement, but it is not always obvious how to plug in to GEO outside of fed context.
  - o I am in NOAA Fisheries and I would like to engage with GEO community regarding fisheries and marine conservation applications. I see lots of land and not so much ocean public applications.
  - o I think any new data stewardship initiatives would be useful to know for stewardship of EO data at NCEI.
  - o Understanding the things we can/should do to improve interoperability and value of data (particularly NASA data for me).
  - o Integration across many different satellite missions.
  - o Funding new tech / to scale programs (two instances).
  - o Interoperability.
  - o Don't know / not sure / what is my agency already doing? (three instances)

#### Questions the audience posed to us, grouped by theme:

- Engagement
  - o Should ESIP have a session like: "ESIP input to USGEO priorities"? Would this be welcomed by USGEO? Would this provide a good pathway for collaboration?
  - o How might ESIP successfully engage with other federal agencies that are part of USGEO, but not part of ESIP? We would love to have them engage
  - o GEO also has many Participating Organizations (including ESIP!). Is there (or should there be) some way for USGEO to coordinate or engage with U.S.-based POs?
  - o USGEO seems like an agency-only group. How does small business innovation get recognized&have an opportunity to present in a welcoming environment?
  - o How does GEO currently or plan to interact with tribal communities?
  - o What can NASA do differently to better support the various GEOs? What are examples of NASA activities that have been counterproductive to GEO objectives?
- Data acquisition / management
  - o How does/will commercial data acquisition figure into GEO, particularly given the circumstances where that data is behind a paywall?
  - o Before, we had only a few expensive EO satellites from only big govt agencies. Now, we have many cheap ones from many groups. How are we adapting to this?
  - o Does it make sense to have a working group to address end-user and DAAC user experience?