

# California Geological Survey

## Staying Relevant After 150 Years

It has been attributed to the historian Will Durant that, “*Civilization exists by geologic consent – Subject to change without notice.*” Unlikely that California’s early State Legislature had this in mind in 1851, during the heady Gold Rush Days, when it appointed Dr. John B. Trask (a physician) as the first State Geologist.

Dr. Trask impressed the State’s officials with the need for a geological survey, and the Legislature established in 1860 the Geological Survey of California. It appointed Dr. Josiah D. Whitney as the second State Geologist. Dr. Whitney’s first work was on the State’s paleontology – not its mineralogy. This was especially frustrating to the Legislature, since it wanted information on the State’s gold resources. Whitney’s rather sharp rebukes to the Legislature and the Governor ultimately resulted in Whitney’s departure in 1874.

It is from this example that a renamed survey, the State Mining Bureau, came into existence in 1880, well instructed with the need to be “relevant” in its products.

Since 1860, California has had six different names attached to its Survey. Each name was created to more accurately reflect the relevancy of the work being performed. Perhaps appropriately, the Survey has had 12 different logos over the last 150 years to reflect its work and government agency affiliation.

With few initial lapses, the California Geological Survey (CGS) has evolved to provide relevant products and services to its constituents. Whereas the early Survey was focused on geologic mapping and mineral resources, later surveys have successively expanded into broader areas. The name “Geology” was reincorporated into the Survey’s name in 1962, showing that the Survey was more than just Mining. Two State agencies, the Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources and the Office of Mine Reclamation, were born from CGS.

Today, CGS produces a variety of modern, detailed geologic maps, reports and data about the State’s geologic and seismic hazards, mineral resources and other geologically related topics. CGS’s products are used by a variety of Federal, State and local government agencies, businesses, consultants, universities and schools. CGS is internationally recognized as a leading influence on public policy related to geologic and seismic hazards.

### Biography

John G. Parrish was appointed on April 1, 2005 to serve as the California State Geologist and Chief of the California Geological Survey (CGS). The State Geologist is the primary contact and spokesperson for the California Geological Survey with the Director of the Department Conservation, the Resources Agency, the Governor’s Office, the State Legislature, and the State Mining and Geology Board. Prior to his current position, he was the Executive Officer for the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) for eleven years. John served briefly as the Executive Officer for the Board of Registration for Geologists and Geophysicists before his assignment with the SMGB.

Before coming to State service, Dr. Parrish spent 21 years in various capacities of geological exploration for a large international petroleum company. In this capacity, he undertook exploration activities throughout the Rocky Mountains, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, the North Sea, North and West Africa, and California. John was the Geological Manager for operations in London, England, and Division Geologist for company operations based in San Antonio, Texas, and Bakersfield, California.

A native of California, he was raised in Los Angeles. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Geology from the University of Redlands in Southern California; a Master of Science Degree in Geology from the University of Houston, Houston, Texas; a Master of Business Administration from the California State University; and, a Ph. D. in Marine Geology from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Wales, U. K.

Parrish is a California licensed Professional Geologist, a Certified Professional Geologist by the American Institute of Professional Geologists, a Certified Petroleum Geologist by the American Association of Petroleum Geologists and a Founding Member of the Energy Minerals Division, and a Member of the Society of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers.

He is the Chair of the Geologic Hazards & Policy Committee of the Association of American State Geologists; Chair of the California Earthquake Prediction and Evaluation Council (CEPEC) which reports directly to the California Emergency Management Agency on earthquake matters; Chairman of the Western States Seismic Policy Council; Board Member on the Consortium of Organizations for Strong Motion Observation Systems, and Member of the USGS's Scientific Earthquake Studies Advisory Committee.

Recently Parrish was awarded the John T. Galey, Sr. Memorial Public Service Award by the American Institute of Professional Geologists. This national award is given to an individual for outstanding public service well beyond the normal professional responsibilities.