KGS director leads push for weather resilience

LEXINGTON - When Michael McGlue, Ph.D., took the helm of the Kentucky Geological Survey (KGS) last fall, he took on a key role at a pivotal time as Kentucky faces increasingly extreme weather.

"Kentucky really is a paradise for geologists," said McGlue, Alumni Endowed Professor and KGS director. "There are so many different aspects to the natural environment here that are fascinating. When I took over as director of the 14th Kentucky Geological Survey, a big motivation for me was to push hard on helping the state become more resilient to natural hazards.'

McGlue is leading a bold initiative focused on hazard preparedness, geoscience education and workforce development. At the heart of that agenda is the CLIMBS project, a major initiative funded by the National Science Foundation, uniting multiple Kentucky universities to prepare communities for the beyond modeling environintensifying impacts of evolv- mental threats — it's preparing weather patterns.

"And so, we need to prepare toward strengthening Ken-background, brings that same

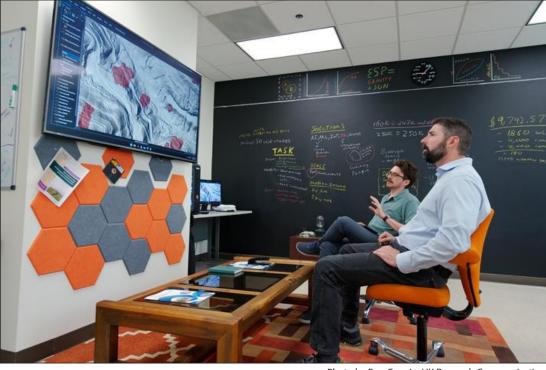


Photo by Ben Corwin, UK Research Communications

Mike McGlue is guiding the Kentucky Geological Survey's work on hazard preparedness, geoscience education and workforce development.

for extreme weather events tucky's geoscience workforce. philosophy into the classroom that might trigger floods and landslides.'

ing students and communi-Ultimately, we want our ties. With funding for educapeople to be healthy and safe. tional outreach and student We want our infrastructure training, McGlue sees the to be strong," McGlue said. initiative as an important step

"We really need to develop a workforce that has skills in build our workforce moving into the future, to be climate and hazard ready."

McGlue, a field scientist by problems."

and lab.

"I think it's really import-The CLIMBS project goes the geosciences," McGlue ant for students to get out in said. "That's something that's, nature and make observaat the moment, lacking in tions," McGlue said. "I want the state. We really need it to them to understand the world that surrounds them, ask good questions and critically think through how to solve

in projects under the mentorship of seasoned geologists through programs like the Paul Edwin Potter Internship at KGS. The program provides Kentucky university students interested in geoscience and adjacent research areas like geography, public health, data science and engineering the opportunity to get realworld experience and engage in a hands-on research proj-

KGS also improves public access to geological data through its user-friendly website with interactive maps and resources for researchers, educators, industry and the general public. KGS researchers are actively engaged in projects that touch energy, water resources, natural hazards, karst, geohealth and more. KGS data are accessible and freely available to all stakeholders.

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Request to restore \$10.6M in aid to KY schools denied

Education commissioner: State will keep pushing to get money released

BY MCKENNA HORSLEY

The U.S. Department of Education denied a \$10.6 million request to extend COVID relief funding submitted by the Kentucky Department of Education on behalf of school districts for nine projects.

However, the federal department did extend COVID relief funding for two Boone County projects amounting to about \$44,000. That a year of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

School districts and states previously had until March of 2026 to spend COVID-19 relief funds that had been approved. However, in resources and improve a March 28 letter, U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon told state education departments that the federal government was immediately halting nearly \$3 billion in relief fund reimbursements.

McMahon wrote in her letter that the U.S. Education Department would consider extending the pandemic relief money on a case-bycase basis.

Altogether, Kentucky was hoping to preserve \$38 million in expected federal funding for projects and services in local districts and \$18 million for the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). The state has not yet received a federal decision on the rest of the projects it submitted for reconsideration, a KDE spokesperson the most projects in

Kentucky earlier this month had asked the U.S. Department of Education (USED) to approve a deadline the Christian County extension for Kentucky school districts to use the COVID relief funds for planned projects that would be in jeopar-

Some have signed contracts or incurred other obligations and must now re-examine their district budgets.

Kentucky Education Commissioner Robbie Fletcher expressed disappointment at the decision and said the state would appeal it. "We expect the federal government to honor its promises to states and to our students,' he said.

"While I am pleased learning platform and continue spending another project to fund money on these two projects that were previously approved by the department last year, it is unfortunate that Kentucky has been denied more than \$10 million — so far — to provide the learning environment of our students," Fletcher said in a Tuesday press release.

"While we hope for more good news in the coming days, we stand ready to appeal the projects that have been denied," he continued. "We will continue to fight for the resources our schools and districts have been promised by USED to continue their mission of providing the best education possible to Kentucky's students."

The KDE request that was denied included projects for school districts in Boone County, Christian County, Clinton County, Covington Independent, Jefferson County and Knox County. Christian County Public Schools had the request — five including about \$7.9 million to construct a new high school.

A spokesperson for schools said in a statement that it will continue to focus on its mission to "provide a high-quality education dy without the dollars. and celebrate student



AP Photo/Rod Lamkey Jr.

U.S. Education Secretary Linda McMahon notified schools in March that the government was moving up the deadline for spending pandemic relief money. Some Kentucky school districts had already committed the funding to projects and services. In this May 21 includes \$26,000 for that USED will allow photo, McMahon testifies before a House Committee an interactive online for Boone County to on Appropriations subcommittee budget hearing on the US Department of Education on Capitol Hill.

success" and work with their lives." legislators "to advocate funds to support the construction of the new Christian County High School."

"Our focus, as always, is on supporting our students and staff," the statement said. "At this time, we are especially com-

district, requested about \$340,000 to provide students experiencing homelessness with wraparound ser- services for students vices.

Mark Hebert, a spokesperson for JCPS, said in an email that are homeless. mitted to celebrating the district is "disapand the next chapter of needs of our extreme-



Kentucky Education Commissioner Robbie Fletcher is

ly fragile homeless Jefferson County student population." for the return of these Public Schools, the The school district had ensure students who state's largest school signed a grant contract are homeless have with the federal government and was using the funding for:

 Case management who are homeless.

 Food and hygiene items for students who

 Emergency shortthe accomplishments pointed that the U.S. term, or under five of our seniors as they government is cutting days, hotel vouchers prepare for graduation funds that support the for families in dangerous situations without

 Transportation to stable schooling even when their families move from place to place.

• Extended learning opportunities for unhoused students.

This article was originally published by the Kentucky Lantern, a nonprofit news site covering state government and politics, at kentuckylantern.com

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