

Natural Resource Information System

Period March 24 to May 22

Goal 1: Acquire, integrate, maintain and ensure accuracy of spatial and natural resource data and information needed for managing Montana's natural resources and environment.

Continued actively working with Census 2000 Public Law data (population figures) in cooperation with the Census and Economic Information Center (CEIC).

Continued enhancement of 'I-team' reports in cooperation with the Montana Geographic Information Council (MGIC), the Montana Local Government GIS Coalition (MLGGC), and the Interagency Technical Working Group (ITWG). Current I-team reports are available at <http://gis.doa.state.mt.us/mtgeo/Framework/Iteam.html>.

Established a Wetland Legacy database for tracking wetland conservation and restoration in Montana, in cooperation with MT-FWP and DEQ. Heritage staff will maintain this in conjunction with the statewide Stewardship map, and presented preliminary wetland conservation totals for year 1 of the Wetland Legacy program at the recent meeting in Bozeman.

Heritage secured grant or contracts to conduct several important biological surveys this year, including wetlands of the Milk River and Upper Missouri River watersheds, development of a web-based "Field Guide" for Montana's Animal Species of Concern, plant species of concern in the Helena National Forest and the coal-bed methane field of Big Horn County, and mapping of prairie dog colonies throughout eastern Montana.

Goal 2: Effectively disseminate natural resource data and information, ensuring broad accessibility, utilizing current technologies, and maintaining a strong emphasis on customer service.

Deployed a variety of new web accessible datasets and programs including:

- - Statewide Digital Orthophotos (aerial photos) (<http://nris.state.mt.us/nsdi/doq.asp>)
- - Updated public land ownership coverage
- - Census Tiger 2000 data

The water and GIS web sites were very busy as usual during the period. The NRIS web pages (Water and GIS) took a combined hit rate of nearly 1,100,000 hits during this period.

Heritage staff completed and distributed three reports during this period: A Faunal Survey of the Centennial Valley (FWS, BLM), the Status of Yellow Cress in Montana (FWS), and Roost Environments for Bats Using Abandoned Mines in Southwestern Montana (BLM, USGS). Several other reports have been drafted and will be completed during June.

Continued to add to and enhance the new Montana Drought 2001 web page. Staff created this page for the statewide Drought Monitoring Committee. The page has been well

received and heavily used.

Answered numerous mediated data requests.

Staff co-taught a three-day Metadata Train the Trainer workshop in Nashville, TN at the expense of the National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC). The materials from the workshop will be used to better enable Montanans to access, understand and use metadata resources.

Several GIS Professionals used the Montana State Library's traveling computer lab. Part of the lab was acquired under a Metadata Grant that the GIS cooperating bodies of the state submitted. The GIS Professionals can then not only provide access to the latest technology, but also agree to include a section on Metadata in their presentation materials.

Goal 3: Ensure that NRIS products, services, and expertise are broadly known, effectively used, and highly regarded by those who require natural resource information and spatially referenced data.

- ❖ Attended quarterly Wetland Council meeting.
- ❖ Attended Water Quality Sub-Group Meeting.
- ❖ Attended quarterly ITWG meeting.
- ❖ Met with TMDL managers at DEQ.
- ❖ Several staff attended and made presentations at the Idaho/Montana Annual GIS Conference.
- ❖ Provided 4-hour workshop on Metadata and NRIS services at Intermountain GIS Conference.
- ❖ Attended Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y) meeting in Kalispell.
- ❖ Participated in 2 Montana GIS Users' Group meetings.
- ❖ Participated in National Geospatial Clearinghouse exchange.

Heritage staff solicited valuable strategic input from several major data users and partners, and began the process of identifying strategic priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. The Heritage director met with MT Dept. of Transportation Environmental staff to get more specific input on needed and potential services and partnerships.

Goal 4: Establish, maintain and continually improve the program structure, resource(s), staff and operation required to successfully implement NRIS mission, vision and goals.

NRIS, in conjunction with Program 1, completed recruitment for the agency web manager. Jon Nehring will be joining the staff in late August.

NRIS is recruiting for the manager of the newly formed User Services and Support Section. Screening and interviews will commence in June.

Former NRIS Director, Allan Cox, rejoined the staff as Systems & Services Manager for the Heritage Program.

Goal 5: Secure adequate and stable funding to successfully accomplish NRIS' mission and

goals.

Due to the fact that several NRIS positions were unfilled for at least a portion of the year and due to the abundance of contracted service work performed, there will be funds remaining in the NRIS core personnel services budget at the end of this fiscal year. This is a welcome change from last year, when core personnel services funds were expended before the end of the year. However, NRIS will likely be fully staffed next year and the new User Services and Support section will depend heavily on core funding.

There are funds remaining in several contracts that can be carried into next fiscal year and at this time prospects look good for developing adequate contracts to fund the balance of the NRIS budget.

DEQ has not yet determined if the \$20,000 in DEQ funding that is built into the NRIS budget as core will be made available this fiscal year. Without those funds, the NRIS equipment budget will be under-funded for this year, as it was last year for the same reason. We have been able to obtain funding for critical equipment this year through contract funding and our equipment budget for the next biennium will be based on stable funding. However, it has become clear that our reliance on equipment is growing and becoming more costly as our use of the web for data dissemination continues to grow. Significant adjustments in our equipment budget will almost certainly be necessary for the 2004/2005 biennium.