

Rationale for Montana's Geographic Information Clearinghouse at NRIS
7/26/2006

A. State Statute

The laws of Montana (22-1-101-218 MCA) stipulate, in part, that the State Library Commission has the power to furnish library assistance and information services to state officials and state departments.

22-1-212 MCA provides for the establishment of a state publications library depository and distribution center, ensuring permanent public access to state agency publications.

90-15-301 MCA provides for MSL to maintain a Natural Resource Information System – a comprehensive system for the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of data relating to the natural resources of Montana.

90-15-303 MCA requires state agencies to cooperate with the library in the planning of the natural resource information system, and requires state agencies to provide data requested by the library for purposes of the natural resource information system.

B. Library Commission Collection Development Plan

The Library Commission has adopted a collection plan which stipulates, in part, that the Library's Natural Resource Information System collects GIS data layers, electronic map themes and associated attributes, from local, state and federal agencies, for Montana, and to a limited extent, for surrounding areas.

C. Library Law

MSL's activities relating to information access are governed by library law under the oversight of a seven member library commission. Decisions regarding development of the collection and providing access through the library are made by persons knowledgeable of laws governing libraries and public access to information. The library commission provides the library a buffer preventing politics from influencing decisions regarding the public's access to information via their State Library.

D. History

MSL, through its Natural Resource Information System, has assimilated, cataloged, managed, and has been a primary point of access to geospatial data since the late 1980s.

NRIS was one of the first FGDC clearinghouse nodes.

E. Recognized Institution

The National States Geographic Information Council recognizes the important role of state clearinghouses, referencing that role in its Strategic Plan Template and in its Criteria for State Geospatial Coordination.

The current agreement between MLIAC and the USGS recognizes NRIS as Montana's GIS clearinghouse.

F. Memorandum of Understanding between ITSD and MSL

Since 2003, MSL's activities relating to assimilation, cataloging, managing, and providing access to geospatial data have been in accordance with an MOU between MSL and the Department of Administration's Information Technology Services Division (ITSD) that states, in part: "MSL is the agency with primary responsibility for ensuring that geospatial information is accessible to the Montana GIS enterprise, hereinafter referred to in this document as the 'clearinghouse function' ". Under this agreement, ITSD agrees that MSL will

Serve as the recognized single portal, within Montana state government, for access to all of Montana's existing and future geospatial data.

Within Montana State government, serve as the data access/distribution portal for federal initiatives such as National Map, Americaview and Geospatial One-Stop, while recognizing that these initiatives also have local and federal government components.

Through this agreement, ITSD commits to: Support the MSL role of data discovery, visualization, access, and dissemination. Specific examples of support include:

Defer to MSL for issues regarding data discovery, visualization, access and dissemination.

Assist in connecting federal, state, local, and tribal agencies with the state portal at MSL for service related to their needs for data discovery, visualization, access and dissemination.

Support the clearinghouse functions of MSL at the Governor's Office, the legislature, with federal, state and local government agencies, and within the Montana GIS community.

Assist MSL in understanding data collected or integrated by ITSD and provide the means to make geospatial information that is maintained at ITSD accessible through the state portal at MSL.

F. Webster Online

Clearinghouse 2 : a central agency for the collection, classification, and distribution especially of information; *broadly* : an informal channel for distributing information or assistance.