



PO Box 201800 1515 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Helena, MT 59620 (406) 444-3115

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**CONTACT:** Evan Hammer  
(406) 444-3115  
[ehammer@mt.gov](mailto:ehammer@mt.gov)

## **Montana State Library's NRIS Program Recognized With Special Achievement Award at International Conference**

(HELENA) --- The Montana State Library is pleased to announce that one of its programs, the Natural Resource Information System (NRIS), received a Special Achievement in GIS (SAG) Award today at the 2009 ESRI International User Conference in San Diego, California. NRIS was selected from more than 300,000 organizations worldwide to receive the award, which recognizes extraordinary contributions to our global society through GIS technology.

GIS combines computer hardware, software, and data to collect, manage, and analyze geographic information. Virtually any information can be linked to a geographic location, helping people see that information as part of a complete picture. With GIS, users can view relationships, processes, patterns, and trends in the form of maps, globes, reports, and charts.

“The State Library is delighted that NRIS was honored with this Special Achievement Award,” said Darlene Staffeldt, Montana State Librarian. “NRIS is truly setting a gold standard for organizations from around the world in its use of GIS technology and this award acknowledges our staff and their hard and innovative work.”

As Montana's source for natural resource information, NRIS works to record, acquire, store, and disseminate natural resource data. Through federal and state interagency data coordination and partnerships and cutting-edge programming, NRIS provides tools for users to access a vast collection of Montana's geographically referenced natural resource data.

During the 2007 legislative session, NRIS received funding to create the Montana GIS Portal, with the goal of providing Montanans with a tool for sharing geospatial data. The Montana State Library partnered with the Montana Base Map Service Center and the Montana Land Information Advisory Council to achieve this goal. The Montana GIS Portal went live and was made completely accessible to the public in September 2008 and can be located at: <http://gisportal.mt.gov>.

“We are very excited about the potential of the Montana GIS Portal,” said Evan Hammer, NRIS program manager. “NRIS staff embraced the use of GIS technology and worked to develop new GIS tools that provide all Montanans with a more flexible and effective means of accessing a great deal of geospatial information.”

“Our mission at the library is to provide all Montanans with access to information they need to make good decisions in their lives,” said Staffeldt. “NRIS is one way we do this by using the latest in GIS technology to make natural resource and geospatial data available when it would otherwise not be easily accessible, if it was accessible at all.”

The Montana State Library has used GIS for over 20 years. A new version of the Montana GIS Portal will be made available before the end of 2009. Additional plans to further enhance NRIS’ service include better integration of the NRIS data collection into the State Library collection and better integration of GIS tools with the State Library’s catalog system to enable geospatial catalog searches.

Other organizations that were honored at the ESRI User Conference include NASA Langley Research Center, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Yosemite National Park, the City of Madrid, and DHL Express.

To learn more about the 2009 SAG Award winners and to view their photos and project descriptions and images, visit <http://esri.com/sag>. To learn more about NRIS, the GIS Portal, and other Montana-specific GIS projects, contact Evan Hammer at (406) 444-3115 or at [ehammer@mt.gov](mailto:ehammer@mt.gov).