

Natural Resource Information System
Period Jan 26, 2002 – Mar 15, 2002

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.

Completed work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop and deploy 24k soils data and map interpretations at NRIS.

Continued the final naming QA/QC process for the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) project. NRIS, through an agreement with USGS, is the custodian of the NHD in Montana and is responsible for completing and QA/QC of the dataset.

Acquired and began integration of another 1,100 digital aerial photos into its statewide inventory.

Updated web systems with latest land Stewardship coverage maintained by the Heritage Program.

Acquired software, hardware, and training to begin transition of the Heritage BCD database into the new BIOTICS system.

Completed the Windows 2000 server and operating system migration for all key NRIS servers.

Obtained new NatureServe software & Oracle server to migrate Heritage Program databases to an up-to-date software environment.

Began assembly of status, management and habitat data on plant species to expand add the Web-based Rare Plant Field Guide (project with BLM)

Acquired, integrated, and quality checked State Trust land information into the Heritage Stewardship database. This effort marks a major step in ensuring the completeness and accuracy of the database.

Heritage Program received verbal approval of grant awards for projects focusing on the distribution and status of sagebrush communities and Animal Species of Concern (partnership with MT-FWP and BLM), riparian bats (with BLM), and analysis of watershed health.

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 new website for the dissemination of NRCS soils data.

Deployed new Digital Line Graph data for Yellowstone Park.

The NRIS web pages took a combined load of over 1.5 million hits during the 6 week period. Staff also answered numerous mediated data requests.

Developed and deployed the Montana Wetlands Legacy web site to track progress on wetlands conservation throughout the state: <http://wetlandslegacy.org>. This project is a partnership between the

NRIS Heritage Program and MT-DEQ and MT-FWP.

Completed reports on Plant Species of Concern in coalbed methane development areas of Big Horn County, bats of the Pryor Mountain area, and the status of the Ute Ladies-tresses orchid in Montana. Several other reports were added to the website, for users to download in Adobe format.²²²

Continued to post the drought map series for 2002, and continued to add to and enhance the Montana Drought monitoring web page.

Continued significant enhancements to FWP Montana River's Information System.

Added coverages and features to the NRIS thematic mapper.

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.

Presented Program information to the Environmental Quality Council and suggested ways for NRIS to better serve the needs of the Council.

Attended and presented at the annual Disaster and Emergency Services and Montana Association of Counties workshop in Kalispell.

Presented Program information to the State Chief Information Officer, Brian Wolf.

Presented NRIS information and services to members of the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

Discussed NRIS involvement with GIS data provision to disaster and emergency working group.

Nine staff attended and gave several presentations at the NatureServe Western Heritage Conference in Reno, Nevada.

Met with members of the Legislative Audit Division to discuss their use of NRIS products and services. Planned for a training session on the use of NRIS data and GIS technology for division staff.

Attended and presented at the annual Montana Association of Registered Land Surveyors conference in Billings.

Attended interagency Wetland Coordination Council meeting.

Attended the monthly Drought Monitoring Committee meetings.

Attended transportation working group 'I-team' meeting.

Lead watershed delineation working group 'I-team' meeting.

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

Held the 2nd meeting this calendar year of the NRIS Advisory Committee. Standard operating procedures were approved and a new issue of NRIS becoming the 'official' repository for Montana Framework data layers was introduced.

The vacant NRIS positions of Water Information System Manager and GIS Technician were posted and advertised with review of applications to begin March 15, 2002.

Heritage staff began developing a position description for an Aquatic Ecologist, for which partial funding has been committed from The Nature Conservancy's Freshwater Initiative. This position would work with partners to incorporate more effective information on Montana's aquatic diversity into the MTNHP data system. Heritage also began recruiting for a Project Support Biologist, which will replace two temporary half-time support positions.

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

Began the planning process for the 58th legislative session by identifying the funding necessary to continue to serve existing program needs as well and identifying potential new proposals. NRIS is primarily concerned with having the funding identified as "one time only" last session added to the base budget to become permanent. NRIS is also asking for core funding for an additional FTE, which would decrease our reliance on contract funding.