

## Natural Resource Information System (NRIS)

January 25, 2002 – April 1, 2003

**NRIS Goal 1:** To fulfill its mandate to be the source for natural resource information in Montana, NRIS acquires, integrates, maintains, and documents natural resource data and information needed for understanding, managing and utilizing Montana's natural resources, and environment.

Augmented data holdings in the Water Quality Monitoring site database. This database and access system now has over 27,000 unique locations of various agencies' water quality monitoring sites and nearly 84,000 records of water quality metadata about those sites. You can access this information from <http://www.nris.state.mt.us/apps/wqproject/WaterMain.htm> or use the NRIS Thematic Mapper (<http://nris.state.mt.us/mapper>), click on the 'Water' tab, and select one of the maps displaying locations of water quality monitoring sites.

Continue to play an active role to encourage and support the development and refinement of priority datasets, serving on most of the Montana Geographic Information Council (MGIC) Implementation Teams (I-Teams) and chairing four.

Met with representatives from the MT Bureau of Mines and Geology to discuss options for serving the Bureau's 1:100,000 scale geology maps. Also discussed options for providing access to a new regional landslide product.

The Data Access I-team met several times with USGS representatives from Denver to discuss, plan, and begin implementing the USGS "National Map" application from the State Library. A prototype is planned for late May.

The Natural Heritage Program published its annual Animal Species of Concern List. The 2003 Animal Species of Concern report is issued jointly by the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) and the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) and is the result of an agreement between MFWP and MTNHP to determine the status of and manage the data associated with Montana Animal Species of Concern (MASC).

In addition, the Natural heritage Program also published the following new reports:

*Plant and Animal Resources and Ecological Condition of the Hanging Woman Basin in Big Horn County, Montana and Sheridan County Wyoming*

*Globally Significant Plants in Southeastern Big Horn and Southwestern Rosebud Counties, Montana*

The Natural Heritage Program created maps of public lands, conservation easements, and special designations for every county in Montana. These large scale, detailed maps were then sent to each county's planning department or county commission. In addition, similar maps were created for each national forest and BLM office in Montana.

The Heritage Program and Fish, Wildlife and Parks personnel worked together to incorporate new bald eagle location and nesting information into the Heritage

observation database. This new information will be used in both FPW and Heritage projects.

**NRIS Goal 2:** A broad range of user groups can easily locate data in effective formats. Users find that this information is augmented with related datasets to increase its value. Potential NRIS users are well informed of information available through the clearinghouse and trained in the use of NRIS tools. Staff assistance is available when needed to assist users in locating and utilizing data.

**Use and Requests:**

Web site use continues to grow. The NRIS web site is now routinely averaging over 1,000,000 hits per month (nearly 1.3 million in March). In the first three months of 2003, the site averaged 1,972 visitor 'sessions' per day, each averaging nearly 13 minutes. These equates to about 424 cumulative hours of use of our web resources per 24 hour day.

Requests for staff-assistance in locating and obtaining data remain steady, even as web-site usage grows. In the first three months of 2003, Heritage and NRIS staff have received nearly 550 mediated requests (See table below).

Mediated Requests by sector, received by NRIS staff in the first three months of 2003.

Category	Count
Education	36
Federal Government	72
Foreign Government	2
Montana State Government	247
Private	163
State/Local Government	21
Tribal Government	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>546</b>

**New Services:**

Built statewide coverages of Tiger 2000 road data and incorporated into the Thematic Mapper.

Re-designed Thematic Mapper interface page into new format that is easier to use. Added 5<sup>th</sup> code watershed search feature to mapper.

Working with DNRC, we now have near real-time updates to the Water Rights data access system (<http://nr.is.state.mt.us/apps/dnrc2002/waterrightmain.htm>). Now, these data are updated automatically on a weekly basis. This new feature greatly enhances the utility of the water rights data.

Continued updates and maintenance of the MT drought monitoring page. NRIS maintains this comprehensive source of drought information as a service to the Montana Drought Advisory Committee. NRIS will soon make available through this site over ten years of Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI) data.

The Natural heritage Program has been working on moving all of its sensitive species data into a new data management system called BIOTICS. The first components of the new system were installed in the early winter and are greatly improving the program's ability to more accurately manage its element occurrence information. The final installation of BIOTICS will occur in mid-April.

The Natural Heritage Program has created a new version of its main data retrieval and reporting GIS application MAUDE. The new MAUDE application uses the BIOTICS data and enables faster and more accurate maps and reports used for environmental reviews.

The Heritage Program in conjunction with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has unveiled a new Animal Field Guide on the web. The new, joint product can be viewed at the FWP website at <http://www.fwp.state.mt.us/fieldguide/default.aspx>. FWP web programmers wrote the application, while Heritage science staff supplied much of the content, particularly for the sensitive species portions.

**Outreach:**

Staffed a booth at the state Disaster and Emergency Services annual meeting in Helena, and made a presentation on the NRIS web site, and interactive tools.

Presented an NRIS demonstration to a continuing education group of teachers from the Helena area.

Presented a GIS day 'light' set of activities for school children from Kircher School in the Miles City area.

Staffed booths at both the Billings and Missoula outdoor shows.

Presented NRIS applications at the MT Rural Water Supply conference in Great Falls.

Submitted several news releases relating to NRIS activities, and published a new version of the Intermountain GIS newsletter.

**NRIS Goal 3:** In order to fulfill its mandate as described under Issues 1 and 2, NRIS secures adequate and stable funding.

Provided input to the preparation of testimony in support of the NRIS budget presented to the Education Sub-committee by the State Librarian. Attended and provided testimony at legislative budget hearings. Met with legislators to provide follow-up on issues relating to NRIS budget.

The sub-committee is proposing that Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) funds may be a way to augment the budget for NRIS.