

Natural Resource Information System

Period Mar 16 – May 22, 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.

- Posted updates to the land stewardship database and the Bureau of Mines and Geology's Groundwater database.
- Acquired, processed and mounted over 1,000 new Digital Aerial Photographs for Montana, bringing our inventory to about 86% of the state.
- Acquired and began processing an updated abandoned mines database from the Bureau of Mines and Geology. The new coverage will replace an inventory completed in 1992, and includes information relating to mines on Forest Service and BLM lands.
- Acquired and began processing an updated Digital Elevation Dataset from USGS.
- Nearing completion of final QA/QC work on the new 1:100,000 scale National Hydrography Dataset for Montana. NRIS is completing this work and will continue to act as custodian for this dataset under a contract with USGS.
- Began work on deploying a new dataset for FEMA floodplain mapping in Montana, in cooperation with DNRC. The system will provide the means to locate scanned images of floodplain maps for a specified geographic area.
- Obtained new NatureServe software & Oracle server to migrate Heritage Program databases to an up-to-date software environment. This is a significant modification in the way that the Heritage Program will manage data, and will keep the program compatible with counterparts throughout the world.
- Heritage botanists conducted literatures searches, reviewed and abstracted information on the ecology and management of over 30 plant Species of Concern from dozens of published and unpublished reports. This information was summarized for integration into the MTNHP databases and the on-line Rare Plant Field Guide.
- Acquired the BLM's spatial dataset for federal land ownership in Montana, and began integration and updating of the MTNHP Land Stewardship data. The stewardship database was also updated with additions from various partners in the project, including land trusts and other public agencies.
- Heritage Program biologists solicited information and recommendations for annual changes to the Montana Plant and Animal Species of Concern lists. Jointly with MT-FWP, held a meeting with fisheries and wildlife experts to review proposed changes, and also met with USFS biologists to ensure coordination of rare plant status evaluations and lists.

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

customer service.

- Completed and rolled out the new "Request Tracker". This system provides an integrated database for mediated requests for the GIS, Water Information, and Heritage Programs. The Internet application allows patrons to log on to the system and enter new requests, view the status of current requests, or view their history of completed requests. The system is the culmination of work completed over the past several months in database design, data integration, and programming. Nearly 1,000 patrons were notified of the new integrated system on May 22. The public interface is available at <http://nris.state.mt.us/reqapp/userMain.htm>. Data for FY02 was ported into the system from the three departments.
- The NRIS web pages took a combined load of over 2 million hits during the 9 week period. Staff also responded to numerous mediated data requests. To date, over 1,700 mediated requests have been handled this year.
- Continued to post the drought map series for 2002, and continued to add to and enhance the Montana Drought monitoring web page.
- Completed enhancements to FWP Montana River's Information System, including modifications to the user interface and incorporation of lakes into the system. The new system, called the Montana Fisheries Information System, will be deployed in late May.
- Heritage Program staff made significant improvements to the design and content of the website, including additional reports available on-line, adding a list of current projects, highlighting the Montana Bird Distribution database, and providing better information describing the program.
- Wetland data from the Heritage Program, MT-DEQ and the University of Montana's Riparian & Wetland Research Program were added to the NRIS thematic mapper.
- Completed reports on the ecology of the threatened plant Water Howellia; and Wetlands of the Thompson River Drainage.

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.

- Made presentations and/or hosted display booths at the:
 - Soil & Water Conservation Society Annual Meeting,
 - Montana Weed Control Association training session
 - Montana – Idaho GIS User's Conference (2 presentations and 1 workshop)
 - Blackfoot challenge watershed and educators training in Missoula
 - MLA conference in Great Falls
- Attended and presented at a National IMLS 'Web-Wise Conference.
- Attended and presented at the USGS Central States Region National Map conference in Denver.

- Attended the quarterly Interagency Technical Working Group (ITWG) meeting.
- Provided program overview and briefing to the Governor's Natural Resources Advisor, Todd O'Hair and to Lieutenant Governor Karl Ohs.
- Prepared news releases relating to many of the data acquisitions and deployments described above. These are being routinely printed by a variety of newspapers and association newsletters across Montana.
- Continue to sponsor and host monthly Friday Afternoon Seminars, at which NRIS and other agencies, organizations, and businesses are able to present a topic of interest to the GIS community.
- Submitted an article printed in the Montana Outdoors May/June 2002 issue that describes the link between NRIS and FWP that provides the ability for FWP to deploy applications such as the Hunt Planner.

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 3rd meeting this calendar year of the NRIS Advisory Committee (NAC). The committee has asked to play a stronger and more formal role in resolution of issues. The Framework data issue presented to the Commission on April 10th was put before the NAC for preliminary discussion on March 13th, then discussed at a special meeting for that purpose on May 14th. The discussion document and resolution was modified slightly from that passed by the Commission; however, the overall intent remains the same. The revised document is attached. The issue has now been taken to the ITWG with the intent that the Montana Geographic Information Council take action on the issue at their meeting in September.
- Recruitment to fill the position of GIS Data Technician was successful; starting date for the position is June 10th.
- Recruitment to fill the position of Water Information System manager resulted in the selection of a very strong applicant; however, we were unable to meet his salary demands. Review of the remaining applicant pool is now underway.
- The Heritage Program successfully recruited a Project Support Biologist to assist science staff with fieldwork, data processing and report preparation. The Heritage Botany Manager position was left vacant again as Richard Caners regrettably submitted his resignation, to return to Winnipeg for family reasons.
- Input to the development of the Agency IT Plan.

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

- Submitted budget proposals to retain funding identified as "one-time-only" last session and to move one FTE from modified (contract supported) to core, with the intent that the position be

funded through RIT.

- Because legislative appropriations for salary are based on entry level salary for positions vacant during the base year "snapshot", what is officially funding for six FTE at NRIS actually funds only approximately 5.2 FTE during FY 02/03. We therefore continue to struggle to balance core funding with contract funding. This situation will be alleviated somewhat for FY 04/05 if NRIS is fully staffed when the snapshot for FY 04/05 funding is taken near the end of FY 02.