

Montana State Digital Library

April 2006 – May 2006

Natural Resource Information System (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.

- NHP added more than 1,300 new animal observation records into our Animal Point Observation Database (POD). In addition, NHP staff completely revised and updated all of our element occurrences locations for Species of Concern fish in Montana. This effort resulted in the creation of more than 2,000 mapped locations of fish.
- The Montana Natural Heritage Program received the 2006 "**Outstanding Technological Advancement Award**" for a natural heritage program at NatureServe's International Leadership Conference in April. This award recognizes an impressive array of ground-breaking accomplishments by NHP staff, including:
 - innovative new tools for accessing data via the web,
 - new, more objective ranking procedures for species' status assessment,
 - automating the creation of Element Occurrence records, thereby doubling our holdings from 6,000 to 12,000 records in just one year; and
 - adding quality ranks to all of our plant Species of Concern EO's.

The Montana Natural Heritage Program was selected for this award from the network of 75 natural heritage programs and conservation data centers in the Western Hemisphere, which are coordinated by our international affiliate, NatureServe.

- The 2005 National Agricultural Imagery Program (NAIP) color orthophotography was processed into manageable file sizes for download. Users can download these geo-referenced air photos to use within their GIS software. The NAIP photographs have also been integrated with the Topofinder II application on our website. Later this summer, these orthophotographs will be loaded into a spatial database so they can be made available via our image service and the Digital Atlas. These efforts have been conducted under a federal wetlands inventory grant in partnership with DEQ.
- NRIS staff configured and populated two clustered database servers in the blade server array. We plan to move production SQL databases to this new environment in early to mid June.
- NRIS staff worked with Mike Price to install 7 GB of hard disk space in the MSL storage area network.

Goal 2: A broad range of user groups can easily locate data in effective formats. Users find this information 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.

Services:

- NRIS began conducting its 2006 NRIS Online Survey. The purpose of the survey is to find out who patronizes NRIS and for what purposes, to gather feedback regarding current NRIS websites and services, and to inform decisions about possible future NRIS service offerings. The survey instrument consists of 17 questions that are focused primarily on NRIS services other than those provided by the Natural Heritage Program. The survey will be available on the NRIS website through June 16, 2006. So far, we have received 372 responses.
- NRIS Web States: **nrис.mt.gov** averaged 2,887 visitor sessions per day in April and 2,878 visitor sessions per day in May. The five most requested pages were:
 - Montana Maps <http://nrис.state.mt.us/gis/gisdata/lib/mtmaps.aspx>
 - Montana Geographic Information Clearinghouse <http://nrис.state.mt.us/gis/>
 - Interactive Applications <http://nrис.state.mt.us/interactive.html>
 - 2005 NAIP Color Orthophotos http://nrис.state.mt.us/nsdi/orthophotos/naip_2005.asp
 - Montana Land Ownership Maps <http://nrис.state.mt.us/gis/ownmaps.asp>
- NHP Web Stats: **nhp.nrис.mt.gov** averaged 892 visitor sessions per day in April and 874 visitor sessions per day in May. The five most requested pages were:
 - Montana Bird Distribution <http://nhp.nrис.mt.gov/mbd/>
 - Plant Field Guide <http://nhp.nrис.mt.gov/plants/guidebook.asp>
 - MT Heritage Program Publications <http://nhp.nrис.mt.gov/reports.asp>
 - Observation Forms - <http://nhp.nrис.mt.gov/Observations/Observations.asp>
 - Plant Photo Search - <http://nhp.nrис.mt.gov/plants/SearchPhoto.asp>
- NRIS staff filled approximately 175 online data requests this period in addition to about 50 questions and problems that came in via telephone and e-mail.
- Natural Heritage Program responded to 180 Species of Concern reviews during April and May (an average of 4 reviews per business day). Most of these are database searches to identify any Species of Concern that may be in proposed project areas. These reviews are required for environmental assessments and impact statements, many types of permitting, noxious weed control projects, and transportation projects.
- NHP turned-on the new **Natural Heritage Information Portal**, a new state-of-the-art web tool for accessing information on Montana's biological resources. The first version now available on our website serves the Montana Bird Distribution database, which displays the statewide distribution of bird species by quarter degree of latitude and longitude. Using this new tool, anyone wishing to contribute data can enter precise locations for bird sightings in an easy-to-use, map-based interface. Users can also view detailed information on sightings they have entered, as well as general locations for all records statewide. Several different base maps can be selected, including the state highway map, topographic and shaded relief maps, and air photos.

- NHP added a new section to its web site for Aquatic Information. The site contains an aquatic ecosystem classification system and identification guide for the Missouri River Watershed. This classification is the first Western aquatic classification to integrate biological communities with abiotic stream parameters like geology and hydrology.
- NHP completed and published the following reports:
 - *Watershed Assessment of the Middle Powder Subbasin, Montana*, May 2006
 - *Aquatic Surveys and Assessment within the Middle Powder River Watershed*, May 2006
 - *An Integrative Biological Assessment of Sites in the Custer National Forest Ashland Ranger District*, April 2006
 - *Land Mollusk Surveys on USFS Northern Region Lands*, May 2006
 - *Riparian Bat Surveys in Eastern Montana*, April 2006
- Six NRIS staff spent a total of 676 hours working under contracts with other agencies, including Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Montana Dept. of Justice, Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality and the Montana Dept. of Public Health and Human Services. The NRIS projects manager spent about 30 hours during April and May working on reports, invoices and contract renewals for work being performed under these agreements.

Outreach:

- NRIS participated in meetings of the Montana Land Information Advisory Council, the Information Technology Managers Council, The Information Technology Board, the E-Gov Advisory Council, The NHP Partners Committee, the EPHT Advisory Council, the Governor's Drought Committee, and the Homeland Security GIS Subcommittee.
- NRIS presented "The Montana Geographic Information Clearinghouse" at the 2006 Intermountain GIS Conference held in Helena in early April. Several NRIS staff helped plan the conference, an event which is hosted every other year by the Montana Association of Geographic Information Professionals.
- NRIS presented MSL websites and services at Public Night which was held in conjunction with the 2006 Intermountain GIS Conference.
- NRIS assisted with MSL training in Miles City for about 30 users, mostly from DNRC and Revenue.
- NRIS and NHP participated in MSL training at the State Library and presented the Montana Bird Distribution database at a seminar in May.
- Natural Heritage Program staff conducted training about how to use NHP data and web resources for US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) staff in Malta, Montana on May 23rd. The training included BLM staff from the Malta, Havre, and Glasgow BLM field offices.

- NHP's Zoology staff conducted a 3 day training session for the US Forest Service and a 1 day training session for the US Bureau of Land Management in reptile and amphibian identification.
- A joint project among several private, state, and federal agencies has resulted in a new poster titled, "The Montana Fish Species of Concern," which is now available to the general public. The new poster features all Montana fish that are currently ranked as a "Species of Concern," a status that indicates declining populations and vulnerability to extinction or extirpation in the state. The Montana Natural Heritage Program, the Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service were all partners in production of the poster.

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

- NHP's Ecology Program received two new grants from the US Environmental Protection Agency totaling more than \$150,000 for the next two years. These two grants support wetland mapping and assessment.

Library Information Services

LIS Goal 1: State employees have the information that they need to make good public policy recommendations and decisions.

- LIS staff attended Public Information Officers meeting at governor's office. Distributed management memo to agency PIOs regarding state publications depository requirements.
- LIS staff convened and facilitated PPAC meeting to discuss refinements to proposed 2007 legislation addressing electronic state publications.
- LIS staff scanned 174 DNRC Existing Land Use maps and prepared metadata for their inclusion in the Montana Memory Project.
- LIS staff upon invitation by the state records manager gave a presentation on depository library requirements at the Records Custodian meeting.

LIS Goal 2: The staff of Montana libraries know about and have access to the professional literature that they need.

- LIS staff participated in the Montana Library Association (MLA) conference in Missoula, May 2-6.
- LIS staff participated in the Academic and Special Library Division / Public Library Division (ASLD/PLD) Retreat Committee meeting to discuss workshop possibilities for the upcoming fall Chico retreat. The Collections and Outreach Librarian proposed workshop ideas were accepted by the retreat committee: 1) Grant Writing Commonalities, and 2) Web Template: a standard, user-friendly web template for libraries.

- The Collections Access and Outreach Librarian presented a workshop, “Exploring Google and other Search Engines” on April 27 at the Montana State Library for 7 Montana State agency workers.
- The Collections Access and Outreach Librarian proposed that the “Exploring Google and other Search Engines” workshop be offered to the public library staff as well as state government employees. The Montana State Library Continuing Education Coordinator approved the proposal. In the future, public and state agencies’ library staff attending the “Exploring Google and other Search Engines” will receive 2.0 technology credit hours towards their Montana Library Certification Program.

LIS Goal 4: Users have easy and comprehensive access to information through the library.

- The Circulation Librarian completed 369 interlibrary loan requests and circulated 172 items to state employees since the last commission report. There were 82 loans of MSL materials to public libraries including 18 out-of-state libraries.
- LIS counted 2195 separate visits to the physical collection during the months of April and May. This includes workshop and orientation attendees from both LIS functions and other agency uses of the library’s conference rooms.

MSdL Personnel Notes:

- NHP recently hired Tom Schemm to be its new Wetlands Digitizing Technician in its new Wetland and Riparian Mapping Center. With support from Montana’s Wetland Council and three years of EPA funding, NHP has established a program to map wetland and riparian areas to US Fish and Wildlife Service national standards.
- Roberta Gebhart resigned after six years of employment with MSL to accept a position at the Montana Historical Society.
- Tori Orr tendered her resignation from MSL. She is moving to California to take care of her parents’ estate.
- Perry Donnafield, NRIS web developer, has reduced his work hours to half-time due the birth of his daughter, Sadie Jo.
- Jon Nehring has been hired as half-time, temporary web applications developer for NRIS.
- Gerry Daumiller has been elected president of the Montana Association of Geographic Information Professionals. Gerry will serve a one-year term as president followed by a one-year term as past president.
- Sibyl Govan has been elected to the board of the Montana Association of Geographic Information Professionals and will serve a three-year term.
- Duane Lund has concluded his term as board member and treasurer of the Montana Association of Geographic Information Professionals.