

NRIS Advisory Committee
9:00 a.m., December 9, 2010
Montana State Library (MSL)
Grizzly Conference Room
1515 E. Sixth Ave., Helena

ATTENDEES:

Members: Amy Bamber, Nat Carter, Janet Hess-Herbert, Damon Murdo, Jim Robinson, Stan Sternberg and Robin Trenbeath

Staff: Allan Cox, Gerry Daumiller, Evan Hammer, Stu Kirkpatrick, Bryce Maxell, Diane Papineau, Darlene Staffeldt, Jennie Stapp and Marlys Stark

Visitors: Deb Wambach and Christian Schmidt

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m.

ACTIVITY UPDATES:

1. Training and Outreach

NRIS held several MSDI Workgroup meetings in October. These were scheduled the day before the MAGIP Fall Technical Session so they didn't have to compete with other presentations. They also had some people connect remotely. NRIS held a total of four workgroup meeting: Imagery, Hydrography, Geographic Names, and Metadata. The primary goal of these meetings was to interact with the user community and get feedback to help guide the planning for these groups for the coming year.

NRIS presentations at this year's MAGIP Fall Technical Session were primarily about using and publishing to the GIS portal. There was also a series status reports presented during the MSD track.

The Geographic Literacy Program which is designed to educate librarians about GIS and how to use it to improve library services was fairly active. The GIS Coordinator from Pueblo County, CO, Chris Markuson, gave a workshop at the Fall Workshop on using GIS in libraries. Mr. Markuson has worked extensively with the Pueblo County Library which was named the Colorado 2009 Library of the Year. The Hunting Companion was launched and several other modules that can help librarians help patrons via GIS are being planned. A Farm and Ranching Companion may be next. None of these involve new application or new data but are just a method of putting together a page that will gather and compile available data in an understandable way for the average person.

A presentation on the Montana Place Names book and online application was given at the Butte Archives on December 1.

2. Projects

The DNRC Water Rights Query Tool has undergone some updates and improvements. The map interface was updated. Progress has slowed down on this with the absence of a web developer.

The DNRC Floodplain Coordinator, Steve Story, approached NRIS in early 2010 and indicated that they were planning an elevation and imagery data collection project for the Flathead Valley. The project would use LIDAR technology to capture the data and it will be processed to standards defined by DNRC and the local project partners. NRIS was identified as the desired data distribution hub because of the value of the data for understanding natural resources and because the data was to be made available for public use. NRIS agreed to host these data as part of a contract to develop a web site for data discovery. Gerry Daumiller has been the lead on this project and in addition to developing the web site, he was also tasked with developing index maps and data processing to make the datasets easily distributable via the internet. The Yellowstone Clearinghouse is almost complete.

Projects NRIS is working on as part of the NRCS agreement include putting together data sets to support Cathy Maynard's projects such as a companion website around bird conversation.

3. MSDI Stewardship

The FSA will be flying Montana for NAIP imagery in 2011. Statewide true color 1m resolution aerial photography will be available once this project is complete. There are buy-up options available to the state to add color infrared data or to increase the resolution to .5m. A survey will be distributed to previous NAIP funding partners to determine if either of these buy-up options are worthwhile before any fundraising is started.

The Hydrography framework layer has had two big updates. One is the integration of the NRCS developed Watershed Boundary Dataset (WBD). There had been a set of hydrologic units developed by the USGS and distributed with the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) as well as the NRCS version of the Watershed Boundaries. These are being condensed into a single dataset that will be stored within the NHD data model. As a result of this integration some clean-up of the datasets will be necessary especially in reach codes because these didn't always match across the two original data layers.

The second update was the Border Harmonization Project which involved working with Canada to lineup hydrography datasets to create a seamless transition between the USGS NHD data set and the Canadian National Hydrography Network (NHN). Training has been scheduled with USGS to figure out how this will impact the editing workflow because the Canadian information cannot be edited directly by the USGS. These things needed to be completed at the expense of some local and state projects but hopefully they will be completed soon and we can resume those projects.

Also, the USGS is pushing out their update topographic maps, "US Topo." This project will look much like the old 1:24,000 map product from the USGS but it will be distributed in a digital format using GeoPDF technology and it will include aerial imagery as an optional background layer. Because many of the river features are old, they don't always line up with the aerial imagery and the USGS is concerned about the data not matching up. They have hired staff to

quickly go through every quad in Montana and make quick updates to the rivers if they see large differences between the line-work and the imagery.

4. Staff Training

Duane and Evan attended a data editing workflow training with the Base Map Service Center staff. This training was for an ESRI extension tool that allows the development of directed workflow routines and is the same tool that was used to develop the USGS workflow process that Duane follows when making updates to the NHD.

Staff attended a python class last year and recently participated in a map automation training that examined new python tools that are available in the newest version of ArcGIS (10.0). Currently NRIS has a number of map series that are either out of date or are maintained using out of date technology. Since ESRI has been phasing out their older AML language, there have not been any scripting tools available for automating the mapping process. Python is being expanded to include map production methods. NRIS staff is very excited about the potential of ArcGIS 10.

5. Other Activities

(Robin Trenbeath) Montana has been the leader of a multistate program to explore the feasibility of using cloud computing to support GIS data storage needs. An RFP for the Western States Contracting Alliance might be the result which will produce some sort of hybrid system with local computing power and cloud computing power plus multiple vendors. Cost is unknown at the time but probably comparable to what is happening now just with additional benefits. Data protection is the main concern which is why GIS was chosen to use as most of that data is already public.

NRIS is a voting member of the Groundwater Steering Committee. The purpose of this group is to prioritize groundwater sites to investigate. The group developed a set of scoring criteria for evaluating the sites to decide what investigation they will pursue. Data was gathered and a set of sites have been recommended for the coming biennium if funding is available.

The BMSC physical move to the library has been completed with those personnel physically moved in upstairs and the NHP wetland digitizers moved into a new cubicle area downstairs.

MONTANA NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM (MNHP):

A 25th anniversary party will be held at Bennie's Bistro. A heritage partner's meeting that morning will gather updates.

Information access via mediated requests has held steady with no real increase and with DNRC and DEQ being the top users at 31% and 20% respectively.

Web usage has definitely increased and is expected to continue to increase with new self help web requests. User stats went up about 15% to about 1300 visits per week. MNHP is trying to do more outreach to increase aware.

Tracker went over a million observations. Adding structured surveys has been pushed and they are also pushing to get up site photos. Major users of this application are FS, FWP, BLM and MDT.

The Field Guide which is a joint project with FWP had 223,400 visits in FY10 which is about 233 hours of usage per week.

Hopefully all information will be together in one application by the end of next summer. Point data will all be entered by then.

The Wetland & Riparian mapping project has many partners with 950 quads mapped and 1735 quads funded.

Webinars are going to be available with link on the home page.

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES:

NRIS has both federal and state responsibilities. The US Board of Geographic Names has a website for citizens to propose new names or name changes and investigates the request. The US Board only recognized on name for each feature.

Gerry is the Montana State Names Advisor and does contact with six agencies and the counties to do research on a request. There are about two requests per month. When one suggestion is submitted, often someone else will submit a counter proposal.

Automatic updates and synchronizing is being set up on the Montana Geographic Names MSDI Framework Dataset.

NRIS PLANNING DISCUSSION:

Current priorities are filling the open developer position, focusing on the NRIS collection by doing inventory and working on the spatial data collection development policy, cleaning up the NRIS web pages and working on NRIS partnerships.

Robin made a motion to have a chair of the committee and nominated Nat who accepted provided it was okay with his superiors. Janet seconded the motion and the motion carried. Robin then made a motion to close the nominations, Amy seconded the motion and the motion passed. Nat is the new chair contingent on approval from his department.

The State Library is currently working on their long range plan and will add shorter strategic plans. They are using wiki and other methods to gain feedback and partner input.

FUNDING DISCUSSION:

There are many agencies that would benefit from GIS that may not currently use them or may not want to for various reasons so outreach needs to be a big priority in order to educate people

on what is available and how useful it is. Other agencies are possible source agencies that NRIS needs to be reaching out to in order to gain the data and be able to assimilate it and make it available to others. The advisory committee needs to identify data that isn't being exposed and collected by NRIS.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

DEQ recently had a data flow diagram put together which provides a very good outline of GIS.

Library Legislative day is January 18 from 5:30 to 8:30.

ADJOURNMENT:

The chair closed the meeting at 12:10 p.m.