

Memo

To: Montana State Library Commission

From: Jennie Stapp, Digital Library Director
Darlene Staffeldt, State Librarian

Date: March 21, 2011

Re: GIS Task Force

In September, in response to a request from Budget Director David Ewer, MSL began to participate in a State GIS Task Force. This task force was charged with reviewing “what works and what does not” in GIS in Montana and to make recommendations for changes to improve coordination, efficiency and effectiveness for the overall management of GIS efforts. At the request of the task force chair, Mike Bousliman of the Department of Transportation, MSL along with representatives from the Department of Administration (DOA), Fish, Wildlife & Parks, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Governor’s Office and Lewis and Clark County, are working as a subcommittee of this task force to develop recommendations to improve the organizational effectiveness of Montana GIS. These recommendations center on management of the Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI). MSDI management is currently shared primarily by MSL and the Base Map Service Center (BMSC), the bureau of DOA that move to MSL last November. As noted at the time of the move, there have long been similarities in the work of these two programs and, as anticipated, this move has only increased the number of opportunities for improved coordination of MSDI. However, it also became apparent that, as long as these two programs remain administratively separate, much efficiency such as organizational planning and resource allocation cannot be achieved. Therefore the task force has focused its efforts around the idea of an administrative merger of those staff who manage MSDI. To this end, MSL and DOA both conducted reviews of their statutory authority, mission and goals to determine which department might most effectively manage an administratively merged program to manage MSDI.

Because of MSL’s authority, mission and expertise on information management, we have long believed that it makes the most sense for MSDI to be managed by the Library. After numerous meetings and lengthy discussions, it appears that the GIS task force agrees with this assessment and may soon move forward a proposal to

administratively merge the BMSC into the State Library. A decision to this end is anticipated this week.

This still leaves several questions to be answered including how administration of the Montana Land Information Act may be impacted and, perhaps most importantly, how to fund these changes. The task force has agreed that a decision regarding an administrative merger will be presented as part of a package that will provide recommendations for all of these questions. Once finalized, these recommendations will be presented to David Ewer, Dick Clark, the State CIO, and Darlene and the MSL Commission for consideration.

Though no decisions have been formally announced at the time of this writing, MSL is optimistic that the recommendations of this task force will settle long pending questions regarding the coordination for GIS in Montana and, most importantly, will positively impact the management, access and preservation of GIS data for all users.