



## Montana Geospatial Information Advisory Council Business Meeting

9:00 a.m., January 29, 2026

Zoom

### Executive Summary

**Recording Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1w18PqKRaVM>

#### Attendance

- **Council Members (8/11):** Jennie Stapp (Chair), Allen Armstrong, Valentijn Hoff, Joe Kauffman, Lee Macholz, Eric Spangenberg, Nick Youngstrom, Maureen Celandier,
- **Council Members Absent (1/11):** Adam Carpenter
- **Vacant MGIA Council Positions (2/11):** Private Business (Active in GIS) Representative and Tribal Government Interests Representative
- **MSL Staff & Guests:** Erin Fashoway, Victoria Gersdorf (Admin), Troy Blandford, Evan Hammer, Matt Trebesch, Deepti Kochhar (Esri),

#### Executive Summary

- Approved September 25 and November 13, 2025, Executive Summaries.
- Approved Eric Spangenberg as MGIA Council representative to MAGIP Board.
- Recommended pre-authorization of FY2025 grants and additional funding for Blaine County hydrography project.

#### Call to Order and Introductions

**Timestamp:** 00:00:09 – 00:03:39

- Chair Jennie Stapp called the meeting to order and facilitated introductions.
- Council members introduced themselves.
- Chair Jennie Stapp noted two Council vacancies (Private Business and Tribal), and confirmed agenda with no changes.

#### Business Items

##### Approval of September 25, 2025 Executive Summary

**Timestamp:** 00:03:53 – 00:04:44

**Motion:** To approve the Executive Summary of the September 25, 2025 MGIA Council meeting.

- **Moved by:** Eric Spangenberg
- **Seconded by:** Lee Macholz
- **Vote:** Unanimously approved. Motion passed.

#### **Approval of November 13, 2025 Executive Summary**

**Timestamp:** 00:04:45 – 00:05:56

**Motion:** To approve the Executive Summary of the November 13, 2025 MGIA Council meeting.

- **Moved by:** Valentijn Hoff
- **Seconded by:** Allen Armstrong
- **Vote:** Unanimously approved. Motion passed.

#### **Affirmation of MGIA Council Representative to MAGIP Board**

**Timestamp:** 00:06:06 – 00:08:58

- **Motion:** To affirm Eric Spangenberg as the MGIA Council representative to the MAGIP Board.
- **Moved by:** Lee Macholz
- **Seconded by:** Allen Armstrong
- **Vote:** Unanimously approved. Motion passed.

#### **Pre-authorization of FY2027-28 MGIA Grants**

**Timestamp:** 00:09:54 – 00:13:19

- **Motion:** To recommend pre-authorization of pre-approved FY2025 MGIA grants for award in the FY2027–FY2028 cycle.
- **Moved by:** Maureen Celandier
- **Seconded by:** Eric Spangenberg
- **Vote:** Unanimously approved. Motion passed.

#### **Additional \$40,000 for Blaine County Hydrography MGIA FY2027-28 Grant**

**Timestamp:** 00:19:37 – 00:23:09

- **Presentation:** As explained by Troy Blandford, Blaine County previously applied for USGS 3D Hydrography Program (3DHP) funding for three priority hydrologic units (HUCs). Those requests are still pending. If not funded by USGS, Blaine County would pursue these through the state grant program. The additional \$40,000 would allow Blaine County to expand its hydrography work to include two more basins within an 8-digit HUC near the

Canadian border. This phased approach positions Blaine County well for future USGS funding and supports statewide hydrography goals.

- **Motion:** To recommend adding \$40,000 to the Blaine County hydrography grant to complete an additional 8-digit HUC south of the international border.
- **Moved by:** Valentijn Hoff
- **Seconded by:** Nick Youngstrom
- **Vote:** Unanimously approved. Motion passed.

## Discussion Items

### NSGIC Geospatial Maturity Assessment

**Timestamp:** 00:25:07 – 00:41:20

- Erin Fashway provided an overview of NSGIC’s GMA report card and dashboard assessing state geospatial capacity. Montana’s grades were strong in coordination and cadastral, with opportunities in elevation and transportation.
- Discussion focused on advocacy, funding strategies, and alignment with Montana’s Geospatial Information Plan.

### NSGIC MidYear Meeting

**Timestamp:** 00:41:20 - 00:48:30

- Jennie Stapp provided a summary of upcoming outreach trips to the NSGIC MidYear Meeting and visits with Rep. Zinke, Rep Downing, Senator Sheehy, and Senator Daines offices. Outreach and coordination to build relationships and educating them on the GIS Coordination work, the data we maintain, and the importance of 3DHP work the MSL is doing.

### Big Sky GeoCon – Council Panel Discussion

**Timestamp:** 00:48:30 – 00:51:53

- Erin Fashway led discussion about conducting a Council Panel Discussion at MAGIP’s Annual GIS Conference, Big Sky GeoCon.
- Council Members interested in conducting the panel – Nick Youngstrom, Eric Spangenberg, Jennie Stapp, & Allen Armstrong

## Strategic Goals Update- Improve Geospatial Value

**Timestamp:** 00:51:53 – 01:13:00

- **Presentation:** Troy Blandford presented an update on the MSDI Data Improvement Plan. The initiative aims to enhance geospatial data quality across core themes (e.g., boundaries, cadastral, elevation, hydrography, transportation) through a structured process.
- Troy outlined seven steps: convening working groups, assessing data quality across eight dimensions (e.g., completeness, accuracy, timeliness), creating improvement tables, and ultimately developing 3–5-year theme plans. These plans will guide priorities for grants and future geospatial strategies.
- Currently, six themes have completed quality assessments, and five are drafting improvement tables. Elevation and boundaries are most advanced, with elevation nearing 80% completion.
- **Discussion:** The Council emphasized recruiting diverse working group members and maintaining accountability to ensure broad input and adoption.

## Governance Presentation

**Timestamp:** 01:13:17 – 02:00:00

- **Presentation:** Deepti Kochhar (Esri) presented findings from a GIS Governance Workshop with 17 Montana state agencies, conducted in October of 2025. She outlined challenges—lack of consistent policies, limited leadership engagement, uneven staff skills, and data-sharing issues—and proposed a hybrid/federated governance model.
- Recommendations include forming a formal GIS Managers Steering Committee, creating technical working groups, and prioritizing initiatives like standardizing policies, improving data-sharing, and workforce development. A phased roadmap (stabilize, optimize, transform) was shared, emphasizing collaboration, capacity building, and modernization.
- **Discussion:** Discussion focused on aligning this model with the Council’s statutory role and exploring partnerships with MAGIP and local governments for broader engagement.

## State Fiscal Year 2026 Quarter 1 Financial Report

**Timestamp:** 02:00:45 – 02:08:41

- **Presentation:** Erin Fashoway reviewed the **second-quarter financial report**, noting revenues are strong following an October fee increase, giving confidence in restoring grants and priorities. Spending is below midyear expectations (21%), with minor overspending in Council activities due to added travel and events.

- She highlighted trends in county collections, showing overall growth and projections to nearly double previous years, while monitoring factors like housing trends and legislation that could impact revenue.
- **Discussion:** Discussion emphasized vigilance on economic changes and continued outreach to local partners.

### **GIS Coordination Report and MGIA Grant Program Report**

**Timestamp:** 02:08:41 – 02:30:42

- **Presentation:** Erin Fashoway provided a detailed grant program update for the FY27–FY28 cycle. She confirmed the grant application materials were released on January 15, followed by a well-attended webinar (53 registrants) to explain changes, including the new two-year cycle. A virtual drop-in Q&A session is planned in two weeks. Applications are due February 25, after which the grant subcommittee—comprising Alan Armstrong, Maureen Sealander, Valentijn Hoff, and Eric Spangenberg—will begin scoring.
- An in-person consensus scoring meeting is scheduled for late March, with recommendations presented to the Council at its April 23 meeting and final approval by the State Library Commission by mid-May. Erin emphasized a new requirement: an in-person kickoff meeting in August for grantees to foster collaboration and training.
- **Discussion:** Council members noted the importance of outreach and discussed how the biennial cycle might change workflows.

### **Council Member Updates**

**Timestamp:** 02:30:48 – 02:48:56

- **Eric Spangenberg:** highlighted Big Sky GeoCon in April at Whitefish, noting keynote speaker John Nelson, workshops, and open registration. MAGIP elections are approaching for roles including Vice President and Conference Liaison.
- **Joe Kauffman:** announced the **MARLS Survey Conference** (March 3–6) featuring a LiDAR workshop and a new MARLS website.
- **Lee Macholz:** raised concerns about confusion over EagleView imagery acquisition and local government access.
- **Maureen Celander:** mentioned the **MACO Midwinter Conference** (Feb 15–18).
- **Valentijn Hoff:** reported university changes, low geography degree numbers, and LiDAR data use for research.
- **Allen Armstrong:** discussed federal GIS reorganization and efforts to boost participation in state initiatives.



- **Adam:** Nothing to report
- **Nick Youngstrom:** Nothing to report.

### **Other Business & Announcements**

**Timestamp:** 02:49:00 – 02:50:00

- Local Government cadence and hosting discussed; NSGIC membership reminders issued.

### **Public Comment**

**Timestamp:** 02:50:08 – 02:50:20

- No public comment received.

### **Adjournment**

**Timestamp:** 02:51:46 – 02:51:49

Chair Jennie Stapp adjourned the meeting at 12:01 p.m. Next meeting scheduled for April 23, 2026.