

EDUCATION-COMMUNICATIONS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of Event:

American Planning Association Annual Conference

Attendee's Name:

Joseph J. Kerski, Geographer:
Education/GIS, Denver

Location: Denver, Colorado

Event Dates: 29 March – 1 April 2003

USGS Conference Coordinator:

Pat Schassburger, CR Office of Communications

Other USGS Attendees:

Pete Modreski, Dave Ozman, and Steve Vandas – CR Office of Communications

Neville Gaggiani—Rocky Mountain Arsenal Hydrologist

Gene Jackson – USGS Rocky Mountain Mapping Center

Our Activities At Conference:

Operate USGS information exhibit. The USGS also had 1 paper presentation on hazards in planning.

Summary

I and others at the USGS participated in the 2003 annual conference of the American Planning Association (APA). The APA brings together practicing planners, citizens, and elected officials who are committed to shaping the future of communities across the country. APA is a nonprofit public interest and research organization dedicated to urban, suburban, regional, and

rural planning. Therefore, APA's membership goes far beyond city planners. APA and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), advance the art and science of planning to meet the needs of people and society.

The APA is **the** major planning professional society in North America. Over 30,000 people are APA members. This dwarfs many other organizations that host conferences that we participate in, and illustrates the importance of this group. APA includes local and regional chapters that host events and programs of their own. APA also includes divisions, which are organized along thematic lines, such as information technology and rural planning.

Approximately 4,500 attendees were registered for the Denver conference.

APA's website is <http://www.planning.org>



Colorado Convention Center on 1 April 2003, site of the APA 2003 annual conference.

The next conference is scheduled for 24-28 April 2004 in Washington DC.



The theme for this year's conference was "Special Places, Unique Environments."

By participating in this conference, we demonstrated the leadership that the USGS has in data that communities can use. This includes:

Spatial digital data for analysis in a GIS environment

Natural hazards information for communities

Real-time and near-real time data for communities, such as streamflow and wildfire data

In participating in the conference, the good will and recognition of the USGS in the planning community can be strengthened. Given increasing media attention on "sustainable communities," and in particular, homeland security for communities, the need for the USGS to keep working with

planners is fairly strong.

Exhibits



Over 70 companies and organizations exhibited at the conference.



L-to-R: Pat Schassburger, Steve Vandas, and Joseph Kerski at the USGS exhibit.

Our exhibit was located in the "local government" section to the side of the exhibit hall. This saved us a substantial amount of money (at least \$850). However, I did not notice a loss of exhibit traffic on our side of the hall. Traffic was light, but steady. Some attendees spoke with us for nearly 30 minutes, asking detailed questions about the USGS, The National Map, and our data for GIS use, in particular. We offered USGS plastic bags stuffed with

a few pertinent items.



At the USGS exhibit, we featured information about hazards, the National Map, how to use USGS spatial data in a GIS, how to obtain information from the USGS, and USGS research that affects communities.

Other exhibitors included textbook companies (such as SAGE and Taylor and Francis), planning consulting companies, educational programs (such as the Orton Foundation), software companies (such as ESRI), imaging companies (such as Space Imaging and Digital Globe). Other federal agencies exhibiting included FEMA, HUD, and the US Forest Service. The US Forest Service was one of the sponsors of this year's conference.

Reflections and Recommendations

We received quite a few questions about GIS, many of which stretched my knowledge base, but I was pleased to be of help. The USGS has quite a bit to offer the planning community and I recommend we consider exhibiting at the 2004 conference, especially because it will be held close to our headquarters. I also recommend that we present more papers at the conference,

such as on the topics of The National Map, USGS spatial data, and how to use our data in a GIS environment.

I was surprised at how many organizations and individuals I knew at this conference, even though I don't work with planners on a daily basis. The very first person I saw at the exhibit hall, while registering, was the author of GIS Tools. Later, I spoke with staff from the Orton Foundation, with whom I have worked for 3 years on GIS education initiatives. I also spoke with the staffs at ESRI, AirPhoto USA, Digital Globe, and Space Imaging.

Acknowledgements

Pat Schassburger did an excellent job of keeping all of us exhibitors informed about the exhibit logistics. I also appreciated working with my colleagues at the USGS in Denver at this event. If I have left anyone out of this report, it was not intentional, and we appreciated your service as well.

*** End of 2003 APA Annual Conference
Report ***
