OUTREACH EVENT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Attendee and Report Writer's Name:
Joseph Kerski, Geographer.
Education/GIS, Denver, Colorado.

Event:
National Park Service Lands 2002 Conference

Location: Keystone, Colorado

Other USGS Attendees: 0

Event Date(s): 28 August 2002

Department of the Interior Highlight

Site for National Park Service's Lands 2002 Conference, Keystone Conference Center, Keystone Colorado.

Using Land Resources Data More Effectively

USGS Geographer Joseph Kerski will address National Park Service land resources employees at the National Park Service's Land Resources conference in Keystone, Colorado, 28 August 2002. The conference theme, "Partners in Preservation," will serve as a focal point to improve service to landowners, to park superintendents, and to the land resources team, to promote stewardship of natural, cultural, and human resources, and to build partnerships with the public and among the National Parks.

Kerski's workshop will help National Park Service employees to make more effective use of USGS resources for land resource management, including paper and digital topographic maps, aerial photographs, satellite images, digital terrain models, and land cover data (Joseph Kerski, USGS, Denver, Colorado, 303-202-4315).

Fran Mainella is the Director of the National Park Service. Staff at the conference told me that 20,000 employees work at NPS, making it about twice the size of the USGS. Director Mainella was not present at the conference, but William Shaddox, the Chief of the Land Resources Division, spoke on the opening day of the three-day conference. The conference was held by and for the Lands Division of NPS. Land Resources plays a role in the protection of cultural and natural resources. They must acquire and manage millions of acres of land, assist park managers with realty issues, and participate in the planning and management of the parks. They are the keepers of the official land records and maps for NPS, and hence, that was the reason why Seattle cartographer Frank Sannino invited me to speak about the USGS National Mapping Program. Karen Wade, Director of the Intermountain Region of NPS, was present at the conference.

The conference was organized around three themes—to improve service to landowners, superintendents, and the Land Resources team, to promote stewardship of natural resources, cultural resources, and human resources, and to build partnerships with the public and the parks, and within Land Resources. According to their cartographers,

this was the first time that ALL of the Lands Division personnel have been together in one place.

The Lands Division of the National Park Service, which organized the conference, includes about 250 employees, many of whom are cartographers.

I was incredibly impressed at the high degree of organization that NPS displayed for months leading up to the conference, and at the conference itself. I encourage readers of this report to look at the conference web site:

http://165.83.219.72/lands

The conference web site contained logistics, speaker information, and, in short, everything one would expect from a private vendor or professional society or other organization who can devote much resources toward a conference—however, it was all done by the National Park Service employees, who already have full time jobs. I found it to be the most comprehensive conference web site from any government agency for any conference, and I attend over 20 each year.

Not only were they organized, but the NPS representatives were incredibly complimentary and thoughtful hosts. For example, every presenter had someone assigned to him or her as a coordinator. Lisa Cass, cartographer from the Pacific West Region Land

Resources, was my coordinator, and she helped me with logistics for the room—she even helped me bring in the boxes of materials that I distributed at my workshop. At the conference, I met Leslie Armstrong, National GIS manager of NPS, who told me a bit about their GIS conference in 2003.

At the conference, all of the attendees received items from the vendors, as well as a backpack from the National Park Service, which was made from recycled plastic bottles and manufactured as Fortrel "Ecospun" material.

All in all, this was a perfect example of how a conference *should* be done! I took plenty of mental notes that will come in handy for planning our own conferences.

I was pleased to see that the session I conducted at the conference was full, with approximately 50 attendees. My workshop was called "The USGS Experience—Quad Sheets to Digital Data—Mapping for the New Millennium." I covered the cooperative agreements program, The National Map, formats and coordinates on USGS topographic maps, types of thematic maps, and types and formats of digital cartographic data.

At lunchtime, the speakers were featured at tables so that attendees could talk with them. ESRI, the Colorado Geographic Alliance, and I are planning several events for 2003 that include this exact same concept. We want to make GIS professionals in the community available at these tables during lunchtimes at GeoTech, Technology in Education, and the Western Slope GIS Workshop.

I attended two other sessions at the conference. First, I attended a Tips and Tricks to Enhance Productivity in AutoCAD 2002 by Lynn Allen. Second, I attended a session entitled "CAD vs. GIS—Can't we all just get along?," by Pete Kelsey of K-Tek Solutions and Pete Southwood of Autodesk Inc. Both were excellent sessions and made me realize that 30 years after GIS began, the GIS and CAD groups are still somewhat separated. I suspect that part of the reason is that people who fully know GIS software and CAD software are few, because of the complexity and time required to learn both software sets. Still, I marveled at how much traditional "GIS" analysis can be done within a CAD environment. The old division simply should not exist, as the line between the two is blurry, and one of the speakers suggested there IS no difference between the two.

The conference included vendors, including ESRI, Autodesk, Red Hen Systems, Dell, Avineon, California CAD Solutions, Tobin International, Western Environment and Ecology, and Versar Inc.

Observations and Recommendations

I met another representative from Red Hen Systems of Fort Collins, this time, Troy Hiebsch. I have been impressed by their software before, particularly their software that automatically links digital images to records within a GIS and embeds location data into the metadata of each image. This provides the attributes, features, and more of each pinpointed location through the photograph. In a nutshell, this software makes the process of "hotlinking an image to a map" easy. They make two products that do this—Media Mapper, and PixPoint. Media Mapper is a standalone software program that does the hotlinking. Pixpoint is an extension for ArcGIS that does the same thing, but entirely within ArcGIS. I recommend that two groups give it serious consideration; (1) USGS and other staffs who want to easily match ground photographs to real-world locations with GPS, and (2) educators who need a simpler way of doing "hotlinks." The educational price for these software products may be quite reasonable for an institution of learning.

Joseph Kerski atop Loveland Pass on the Continental Divide, immediately following the conference.

I would like to point out an excellent NPS interactive map center website at:

http://maps.nps.gov

The Park Locator enables users to query for parks on a variety of criteria, and overlay the park on shaded relief maps or satellite imagery. The Park Atlas is an interactive online version of common park basemaps and reference layers, and only exists for Yellowstone and Gettysburg. More are being populated as resources become available.

By participating in this meeting, we sought to further our partnership with the National Park Service. We already cooperate with NPS on such projects as wildfire mapping and data production. I spoke with Frank Sannino and Leslie Armstrong about future participation in this conference, and also in the NPS GIS conference. They seemed enthusiastic about having us at both.

The USGS has a wealth of data sets, programs, and research efforts that the NPS audience was interested in, particularly our digital data sets, and training that we conduct.

I did receive one pointed question about the "lack of response" from the A-16 solicitation. I need to get back with the individual who asked with more information. I also wished I would have had more AutoCAD skills, as many people in the audience used this software, and it would have been good to balance out my examples of bringing in USGS data into ESRI GIS software with bringing in USGS data into AutoCAD 2000.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jack Fordham for his support in allowing me to participate in this conference.

The Colorado Rockies near the conference site.

*** End of National Park Service Lands 2002 Report ***