

## EDUCATION-COMMUNICATIONS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Joseph Kerski, Geographer:  
Education/GIS, USGS, Denver, Colorado.

Other USGS Attendees: Mark Eaton,  
Jeffrey Simley, Kathy Covert, John Chaney,  
John Sellars, and others. Three of our  
USGS interns also attended.

Denver, Colorado, 20-23 September 2005

### 2005 GIS In the Rockies Conference



*For 17 years, people have looked forward to the GIS in the Rockies conference as one of the highlights of the year in Colorado.*

GIS in the Rockies provides a forum for professionals to learn about and to share their experiences with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology. The conference includes special events, exhibits, workshops, and paper presentations.



*This year's conference was held at Invesco Field at Mile High, Denver.*

GIS in the Rockies is a regional GIS conference, attracting participants primarily from Colorado and Wyoming. GIS in the Rockies is organized entirely by volunteers

from the regional GIS community and is sponsored by several professional organizations:

- American Congress of Surveying and Mapping (ACSM)
- American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS)
- Geographic Information and Technology Association (GITA)
- Professional Land Surveyors of Colorado
- Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA).
- GIS Colorado (www.giscolorado.org).

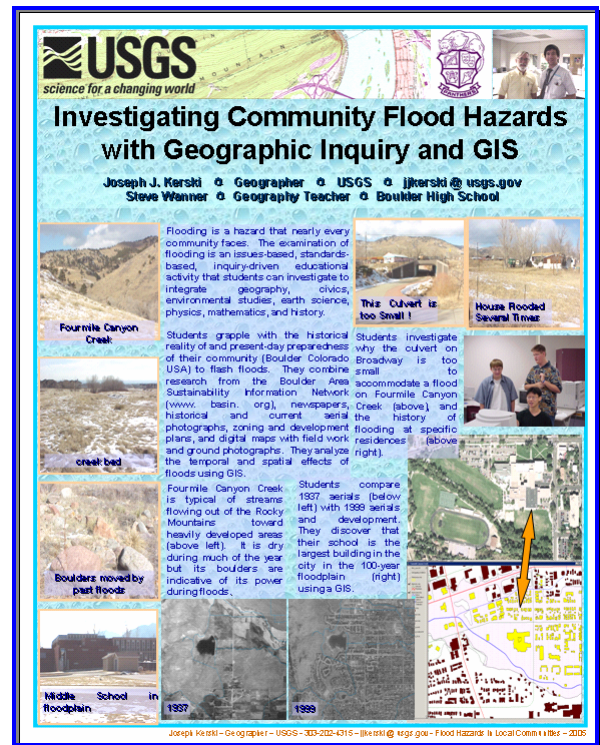


Proceeds from the conference are returned to the sponsoring societies. They use these funds to award scholarships and grants and to host technical sessions and seminars. For example, Rocky Mountain URISA and GITA sponsored educators to attend our GeoTech Colorado conference in Denver in June 2004, which was much appreciated (see my full report and photos on: <http://rockyweb.cr.usgs.gov/public/outreach/reports/geotechco04t.pdf>)

Attendance totaled over 600, including planners, engineers, and scientists in environmental science, hydrology, GIS, satellite imaging, parcel mapping,

transportation, and land use. Also attending were educators, marketers, private mapping, GIS, and remote sensing companies. The GIS in the Rockies program covers a variety of topics, and includes professionals from business, government and academia.

By participating in this conference, we made contacts that will help us meet our data users needs as well and those that will foster future partnerships for the NSDI.



*The poster session at GISITR was set throughout the exhibit hall to encourage conference attendees to network. This year's poster session included my poster, above, on Investigating Community Flood Hazards with Geographic Inquiry and GIS. This won third place in the poster contest. Keith Olson, Brian Bledsoe, and Christopher Cuhacyan won first place with their "Adaptive GIS Algorithm for Neighborhood Analysis of Hydrologic Networks," and RJ*

*Kern took second place with his "Symbol Sets for Mapping Uncertainty."*

## USGS Activities

The USGS has participated in the GIS in the Rockies conference since its inception in 1988, making it one of the longest-running events in which we have continuously participated. We have seen it evolve from its days in Fort Collins to the Colorado School of Mines, to the funky 70s feel of the Regency Hotel, to the Holiday Inn, to the University of Denver, to the Denver Merchandise Mart, and to its present home at Invesco Field at Mile High. We have been involved in the Colorado GIS community during the same period of time, and the conference provides us and others with an excellent opportunity to network with our existing partners and foster new collaborations.

I participated in the conference by:

- (1) Conducting a presentation on using GIS as part of an educational program in geography focusing on flood hazards along the Colorado Front Range.
- (2) Teaching, with Amanda Gierow, an introduction to GIS workshop. We provided information on how to connect with data sources, GIS training, literature, and the GIS community, in addition to discussing what GIS is and how it is used in Colorado and beyond.
- (3) Operating, with Steve Reiter, the USGS exhibit booth.
- (4) Setting up and running the geocaching course.
- (5) Contributing USGS door prizes (maps) for conference and geocaching attendees.

## Workshops



*Joseph Kerski and Amanda Gierow following their Introduction to GIS workshop.*



*Attendees at one of the conference workshops. The breadth of workshop topics showed how diverse the GIS industry is.*

## Exhibits





*The exhibit area of GIS in the Rockies conference provides an excellent opportunity to network with colleagues, as well as to learn about new tools, data, training, and partnerships. Exhibitors included professional societies (GITA, URISA, others), government organizations (National Geodetic Survey, USGS), universities and colleges (University of Denver, University of Colorado at Denver, Metropolitan State College of Denver), and private companies (Geospatial Experts, Space Imaging, Digital Globe, ESRI, and others).*



*Above, Steve Reiter and Joseph Kerski in the USGS exhibit.*



*We displayed and disbursed information about USGS spatial data, the Geospatial One Stop, the National Map, how to use our data within a GIS, scientific reports, maps, and much more.*



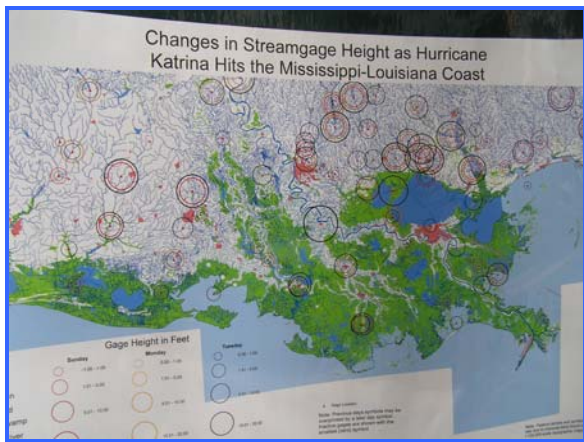
*GIS for the Nation poster that we displayed at the USGS exhibit illustrating the content areas for NSDI initiatives.*



*Some of our excellent colleagues from the Colorado Water Resources Office at the USGS exhibit.*



*Networking at the GIS in the Rockies conference with some of my favorite western-slopers.*



*Jeff Simley created this poster showing changes in streamgage height from Hurricane Katrina.*



*All smiles with Paula Demos and others at DU exhibit and at NOAA-NGS, below.*







Staff from National Geographic.



Karen Brandt and Tina Cary, above, two of the main organizers of GIS in the Rockies.



Rick Bobbitt, founder of Geospatial Experts LLC.



Registration desk at conference.



Dan Mahar staffs the EMA exhibit. I also spoke with Dan about his excellent web mapping and photo tool, Vizimap.





*This was the first time we have exhibited (below right) underneath a giant picture of John Elway!*

### Acknowledgements



*I thank our business partners, Digital Data Services, for generously paying for our USGS exhibit booth at the conference. This provided an excellent means for us to interact with the conference attendees.*

I thank the GIS community for their participation in the conference and making it so memorable. I thank Karen Brandt, Tina Cary, Milly Powell, Jan Van Sickle, and the rest of the GISITR organizing committee for hosting a conference that we all look forward to and for being a pleasure to work with.

I thank USGS geographer Steve Reiter for helping set up and staff the USGS exhibit. I thank the following individuals for conducting the USGS tour: Richard Shields, Rusty Grout, Amy Stavans, Gene Jackson, Pete Schneider, Liz Lile, Mike Stier, Paul Braun, and Jeff Simley. I thank Mark Eaton and Jeff Simley for the posters.



I also thank Sherry Jackson for help with the materials for the conference.

I thank Chris Longo and Esther Worker for their support of and help with the geocaching event and Mark Eaton for finding the “real” geocache for inclusion in our course. If there were others involved with the above activities that I am omitting, know that your efforts are appreciated as well!



*International networking: Inan Kalayci from Turkey and Joseph Kerski at the conclusion of the conference. I appreciated Inan’s help and enjoyed speaking with him.*

## Recommendations

I recommend that everyone in the regional GIS community attend this conference. This particular GISITR conference renewed contacts in GIS educational initiatives and created new ones.

I recommend to the GISITR board that they continue to seek out ways to attract graduate and undergraduate students from the Front Range universities and community colleges. I was pleased to see some faculty and students, and so we are making progress. It is up to all of us to get the word out about this event.

I would also like to see ways of getting more local middle and high school students and teachers who are using GIS to attend this event. At the Intermountain GIS Conference in Montana and other regional GIS conferences, students have the opportunity to display their GIS-generated maps and discuss their research projects. I believe that the entire GISITR conference would be enhanced through greater student participation from K-12 to university level. I did miss the middle school students this year after working with them in 2003 and 2004.

I appreciated the fact that the GISITR conference offered a reduced rate for college students to attend, and offered a free public night on Wednesday evening.

## Special Events



*Above, speaker: and futurist Thomas Frey, Founder of the DaVinci Institute, before his luncheon presentation, with Karen Brandt. On the next day, speaker: Jon Stigant from the Devon Energy Corporation spoke.*





*Above, Lannie Garrett and her band play for the conference attendees. I think she knows a wee bit more about mapping and GIS after interacting with us!*



*We were pleased to have so many of the GISITR organizing committee attend the geocaching event. Above, Esther Worker (right) and Tina Cary (left, front).*

### Technical Tours

Technical tours included some of the Denver area's leading geospatial facilities. We offered a tour of the USGS mapping center in Lakewood.

Other tours included Schriever Air Force Base and NCAR. Together with ESRI, we set up the second annual geocaching event.

### Geocaching Course at Confluence Park

Upon the request of the conference organizers, Esther Worker and I laid out a virtual geocaching course along the South Platte River for the conference attendees. The goals were to familiarize people with the use and operation of GPS receivers in a fun way, and to offer another opportunity for networking with colleagues.

The course is available for anyone who would like to take it, on the following site: (be sure to capture the entire string):

[http://rockyweb.cr.usgs.gov/outreach/gislessons/geocaching\\_gisitr05.pdf](http://rockyweb.cr.usgs.gov/outreach/gislessons/geocaching_gisitr05.pdf)



*Joseph Kerski, Chris Longo, and RJ Kern (GIS Trainer for the BIA) discuss strategies for helping the participants.*



*Above, Chris Longo from ESRI points to a GPS satellite!*



*The course included questions on geography, history, music, and more, tied together with a historic and current transportation theme.*



*Confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River, birthplace of Denver in the late 1850s.*







*RJ Kern with one of our prizes for the geocachers.*



*I hope to see you all next year!  
—Joseph Kerski*



*Historic building along the geocaching route.*



\*\*\*End of 2005 GIS in the Rockies report \*\*\*



*Downtown Denver, 22 September 2005.*