

Western Governors' Association
Policy Resolution 06-14

June 13, 2006
Sedona, Arizona

Geospatial Data Is Part of the Nation's Critical Infrastructure

A. BACKGROUND

1. Geospatial data and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology have become indispensable tools for local, state, tribal and federal governments. Geospatial data, which is the digital representation of geographic features, including transportation, elevation, hydrology, boundaries, cadastre and imagery are essential for addressing critical issues facing western states. Governments use these tools to improve services to citizens and to analyze, develop, and implement public policy related to public health, homeland security, transportation, hazards and wildfire response, energy development, land use, growth management, and many other business needs.
2. The National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) estimates that the geographic data required by state, local, regional, tribal and federal governments will cost in excess of \$6.6 billion for initial collection, not including maintenance costs. Over 18,000 municipal governments, 3,141 county governments, unknown numbers of regional organizations, and over 327 tribal governments are all creating geospatial data in addition to the states and Federal government.
3. Coordination efforts between all sectors of government for data collection and maintenance needs to be dramatically improved. Otherwise, organizations will continue creating the same geospatial data over the same areas resulting in duplicate and sometimes conflicting data. There is potential for tremendous dollar savings as well as better decisions if accurate credible data was developed and shared through a coordinated approach.
4. A vital component of government geospatial information systems are land records and cadastral (or landownership) data. The Bureau of Land Management is working with state and local governments to develop standardized digital representations of the Public Land Survey System and parcel data to meet identified business needs such as forest health and wildland fire management, energy, and economic development. The result of this collaboration is called the Cadastral National Spatial Data Infrastructure (Cadastral NSDI). The Cadastral NSDI is critical for western states where land ownership is a patchwork of federal, state, tribal and private land parcels often with separated mineral ownership. The Common framework of landownership is essential to support many decisions and business processes in the west.
5. NSGIC, in cooperation with the Federal Geographic Data Committee, have developed the *Fifty States Initiative* which outlines a fundamental change in the way governments should work together to build a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). It identifies

the criteria which promote effective statewide GIS coordination activities and identifies characteristics of successful states, which can be used to establish statewide coordination councils that will take an active roll in completing a NSDI.

6. High resolution and current aerial and satellite imagery has become an essential commodity. Currently, imagery is being acquired by hundreds of different entities across the Nation. This leads to higher costs, varying quality and vintage, duplication of efforts and a patchwork of inconsistent and non-sharable products. Coordinating acquisition for large areas will lower the cost of imagery to the taxpayer and improve the availability of standardized, high-quality imagery products.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. Western Governors urge BLM to complete, enhance, and maintain the Cadastral NSDI in coordination and partnership with states, tribal and local governments. Western Governors call on Congress to provide the necessary funding for BLM to undertake this important effort. Western Governors call on Congress to authorize the expenditure of already appropriated funding (i.e. Homeland Security) to create and maintain local, state and tribal implementation of the Cadastral NSDI in support of energy development, forest health restoration, wildland fire management, Homeland Security and First Responders.
2. Western Governors support large area data acquisition practices, as identified in NSGIC's *Imagery for the Nation*, which will keep the cost to the taxpayer as low as possible and improve the availability of standardized, high-quality imagery products. *Imagery For The Nation* is an important new initiative able to meet the Nation's needs, as well as the unique needs of Western States. Western Governors urge Congress to coordinate appropriations to existing federal imagery acquisition programs to fully fund the coordinated approach described in *Imagery For The Nation*.
3. Western Governors support federal, state, tribal and local coordination of GIS activities at the state level through state coordination councils. Western Governors applaud the results-oriented approach to building a National Spatial Data Infrastructure as outlined in the *Fifty States Initiative*.
4. Western Governors support federal initiatives including the implementation of the Federal Geographic Data Committee's Future Directions initiative and the development of the U. S. Office of Management and Budget's Geospatial Line of Business activity. These national efforts must include representation from state, local, and tribal governments.
5. Western Governors believe an intergovernmental approach to development and governance of geospatial activities is necessary to optimize investments and results. An intergovernmental governance approach for the NSDI ensures vital national interests as well as state and local government's business needs are served.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. The Western Governors' Association (WGA) shall post this resolution to its Web site to be referred to and transmitted as necessary.
2. The Western Governors' directs the Western Governors' Geographic Information Council continue to support Western Governors' Association on geospatial data and technology issues.