

**Fifty States Initiative Project
Category 3 – 2006, 2007
Final Report**

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Project Narrative

Summary of Project Activities

The Louisiana Geographic Information Center (LAGIC) the state’s primary contact for geospatial information is also the state point of contact for the Louisiana GIS Strategic Plan. LAGIC proposed in its grant proposal to strengthen the state GIS Strategic Plan by expanding contacts with utility companies that have not traditionally been a contributing partner in the state geospatial community.

LAGIC assisted the Louisiana Chapter of Geospatial Information Technology Association (GITA) with its first organizational meetings. LAGIC provided assistance with the production of a charter and bylaws for the organization.

LAGIC hosted four workshops in coordination with the state of Louisiana’s largest utility company: Entergy. LAGIC choose the areas most affected by Hurricanes Katrina (New Orleans in SE Louisiana) and Hurricane Rita (Lake Charles in SW Louisiana) for the site of the workshops.

LAGIC initiated several data exchanges between Louisiana based utility companies and federal, state and local government entities. The data exchanges resulted in LAGIC providing high resolution ortho imagery of Louisiana cities in exchange for agreement to adhere to FGDC data standards and agreement to share information on the location of fixed assets.

In addition, LAGIC invited state utility company staff to participate in numerous GIS Council activities, including GIS seminars and training workshops, monthly Council meetings and data sharing discussions.

Key Accomplishments

LAGIC hosted four workshops in coordination with the state of Louisiana's largest utility company: Entergy. LAGIC choose the areas most affected by Hurricanes Katrina (New Orleans in SE Louisiana) and Hurricane Rita (Lake Charles in SW Louisiana) for the site of the workshops.

- 1) **Lake Charles**, an introduction to state geospatial activities; LAGIC and the Louisiana GIS Council. Hosted by McNeese State University in Lake Charles, June 29, 2006
- 2) **New Orleans**, an introduction to state geospatial activities; LAGIC and the Louisiana GIS Council. Hosted by Entergy Corporation at their New Orleans gas facility, July 18, 2006.
- 3) **Lake Charles**, a workshop on Asset Management for Utility Companies. Hosted by Entergy Corporation at one their Lake Charles facility. Workshop took place on February 7, 2007.
- 4) **New Orleans**, a workshop on Asset Management for Utility Companies. Hosted by Entergy Corporation at their New Orleans gas facility. Workshop took place on February 8, 2007.

Through the workshops LAGIC was able to identify areas of mutual interest between utility company staff and state agencies. These coordination activities resulted in the scheduling of two additional workshops on the use of Ortho Imagery. The Ortho Imagery workshops were conducted in Lafayette in May of 2007 and in Ruston, Louisiana in June of 2007.

Changes in Statewide Coordination:

Federal and state agencies in Louisiana are more aware of the geospatial needs of utility companies. Utility companies are more cognizant of federal geospatial data standards as well as the need to coordinate with federal and state agencies in disaster situations. This project resulted in numerous contacts between utility companies and federal and state agencies. In addition, this project has resulted in data sharing activities between the states largest utility and federal and state agencies.

Inclusiveness:

The workshops were open to the public and advertised among both GITA members and public utility providers. Unfortunately, the Louisiana Chapter of GITA has so few members that they are unable to regularly attend Louisiana GIS Council meetings.

Practices or Activities that Led to Success:

The workshops were well attended and they provided an opportunity to share information and contacts between utility providers and federal and state agencies. These informal gatherings resulted in a number of data sharing opportunities including the sharing of various geospatial data layers and ortho imagery. The initial workshops helped identify a need for information on the availability and uses of ortho imagery. This discovery led to scheduling two additional workshops in May and June of 2007. Furthermore, the workshops identified the need for better coordination between local governments and utility companies in the production of geospatial data layers.

The states largest utility company provided meeting spaces for three of the four scheduled workshops. This was very convenient and resulted in more participation by utility company staff members. The only drawback to this arrangement is that it tended to discourage other utility companies from participating. In the future, I would schedule meetings in more neutral locations such as a state university or the offices of the local regional planning commission.

Next Steps:

This project has initiated a relationship between private utility companies and governmental agencies in Louisiana that needs to be cultivated with additional exchanges. Utility companies need information from local governments on the location of new subdivisions and industrial parks. Local governments need to know the capacity of utility companies to service growth areas or areas of potential commercial development. The state has an interest in knowing what telecommunication towers and facilities lie in the path of incoming hurricanes so that they can preposition equipment to ensure constant communication in an emergency situation.

Our next step will be working with the Governors Office of Homeland Security and state utility companies in identifying the location of critical infrastructure throughout the state. LAGIC can provide coordination between these various groups and ensure that national data standards are used in the creation of geospatial data. LAGIC, through its involvement in numerous professional organizations (NSGIC, URISA, GITA) can provide local governments with best practices for data sharing with their local utility providers.

The Federal Geographic Data Committee can be helpful in the development of data standards, in the sharing of best practices and in the continued funding of GIS Coordination efforts through the CAP Program.

Attachments: The Louisiana Strategic Plan for GIS Development (Draft Version)