

A NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL STRATEGY

Recommendations for the 2008-2009 Presidential Transition Team

From the

National Geospatial Advisory Committee

October 2008

The National Geospatial Advisory Committee (NGAC) is a Federal Advisory Committee established to provide advice and recommendations related to management of Federal and national geospatial programs, the development of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure, and the implementation of Office of Management and Budget Circular A-16 and Executive Order 12906. The NGAC reviews and comments upon geospatial policy and management issues and provides a forum to convey views representative of non-federal stakeholders in the geospatial community. The NGAC reports to the Chair of the Federal Geographic Data Committee. The recommendations in this paper were approved at the October 15-16, 2008 meeting of the NGAC.

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A NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL STRATEGY

The National Geospatial Advisory Committee urges the new administration to commit to a strategic investment in geospatial programs and technologies to underpin and support the health, welfare, and safety of U.S. citizens. This investment will result in savings in dollars, efficiency, and economic opportunity that will far outweigh the short-term costs. Strong leadership in the development and use of geospatial technologies is critical to the effectiveness of our government and to our position in the global economy. To address the complex issues it faces, the Federal Government should increase its efforts to utilize geospatial information and technologies to their fullest potential, in cooperation with State, local, regional, and Tribal governments.

Geospatial technology identifies the geographic location and characteristics of natural and constructed features and boundaries on the Earth. In today's electronic world, geospatial technology offer a deep analytical capability and visual perspective to government agencies, consumers, businesses and the public that was only available to the military and other government agencies for the past several decades. For the government (Federal, State, local, regional, and Tribal), academia, and the commercial sector, geospatial information provides decision makers more complete information to help them make crucial assessments.

- The Federal Geographic Data Committee's *2006 Annual Report* cites that 80-90% of government information has a geospatial information component.
- The Geospatial Information and Technology Association reports that 70-80% of the information managed by business is connected to a specific location.

SOCIETAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO THE NATION

Advances in geospatial technologies are being leveraged in an unprecedented manner. This opens new alternatives for effective solutions to critical issues in diverse areas such as energy, climate change, homeland security, health care delivery and disease tracking, infrastructure development, banking and finance, agriculture, natural resources, and the environment.

Examples include:

- The capability to examine the location and deployment of renewable energy technologies using geospatial technology is nearly limitless. This allows the expanded use of alternative energy sources to reduce this country's dependence on foreign oil.
- As a tool to analyze the spatial footprint of the mortgage crisis and to develop policies and monitor their effects on our economy.
- Support homeland security and natural disaster planning, response, recovery and mitigation (situational awareness, critical infrastructure protection, floodplain management, wildfire management, hurricane preparedness and recovery).
- Support the scientific analysis of climate change and develop policies and actions to inform society necessary to mitigate the effects.
- Analyze delivery of health care systems across the country and use in the analysis of environmental correlations to diseases, location and population demographics.
- Evaluate crop conditions, monitor and enforce farm subsidy payments, support the futures markets and evaluate food shortages globally.

A recent study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies estimated that at least \$30 billion is generated by geospatial-related companies annually. Geospatial jobs are high paying, high tech, and high quality jobs - the type of jobs the U.S. economy must continue to create and maintain as our information society evolves. The geospatial sector has steadily increased by 35% a year, with the commercial side growing at an incredible rate of 100% annually. The U.S.

Department of Labor predicted that the geospatial sector was one of the three technology areas that would create the most jobs in the coming decade.

In a highly competitive global economy, the United States occupies the leading position in the geospatial sector. U.S.-based geospatial companies, which generate technical, high-paying jobs in the United States, help drive the American economy by providing goods and services that are sold worldwide. All of these efforts support a technology field that has become the cornerstone of navigation and location-based services and play an increasingly beneficial role in almost every aspect of society.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

FEDERAL COORDINATION: To coordinate Federal geospatial activities and to ensure effective intergovernmental and inter-sector partnerships with State, local, and Tribal governments; the private sector; and the academic community, we recommend that the administration:

- **Establish a geospatial leadership and coordination function immediately within the Executive Office of the President. The geospatial coordination function should be included in the reauthorization of the E-Government Act. The function of this position should:**
 - Provide leadership on national geospatial issues
 - Develop a partnership-based national geospatial strategy
 - Oversee the revision and strengthening of policies (i.e. OMB Circular A-16) in concert with the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC)
 - Evaluate and clarify the roles and responsibilities of Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments; academia; and the private sector in the creation and maintenance of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI)
 - Coordinate the funding and acquisition of geospatial data
- **Require OMB and FGDC to strengthen their enforcement of OMB Circular A-16 and Executive Order 12906.**
- **Establish/designate Geographic Information Officers within each Department or Agency with responsibilities stipulated within OMB Circular A-16.**
- **Establish and oversee an Urgent Path Forward for implementation of geospatial programs necessary to support current national priorities and essential government services underpinning the NSDI, such as:**
 - Imagery for the Nation
 - National Land Imaging Program
 - National Land Parcel Data
- **Continue to task the National Geospatial Advisory Committee to provide advice and recommendation for the use of geospatial information and the related policies and programs of the Federal Government.**

FEDERAL STATUTORY REVIEW:

Revise restrictive statutory language as it pertains to non-sensitive address data in Title 13 U.S. Code and to “geospatial data” in Section 1619 of the 2008 Farm Bill.

WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION ISSUES:

Develop new ways to recruit the best minds to enter the geospatial information field. Better coordination of existing training and education grants for geospatial professionals is needed to place a priority on geospatial workforce education.