



The MN GIS/LIS Consortium

A Nomination for the Governor's Geospatial Commendation Award

On behalf of all of its members it is our honor and privilege to nominate the MN GIS/LIS Consortium for consideration of the Governor's Geospatial Commendation Award. This nomination recognizes the efforts of the hundreds of volunteers that have made the Consortium successful as well as all who have realized the great value of the Consortium's mission during the past 25 years.

June 30th, 2015

Dan Ross
State of Minnesota Chief Geospatial Information Officer
300 Centennial Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor's Geospatial Commendation Awards Committee

As current and past chairs, and on behalf of all its members, we are pleased to nominate the MN GIS/LIS Consortium for the 2015 Governor's Geospatial Commendation Award. For the past 25 years the Consortium has yielded tangible benefits for MN GIS professionals through the delivery of high quality training opportunities as well as the opportunity to collaborate and share geographic data, expertise and technology.

It is our belief that our mission, to develop and support the GIS professional in Minnesota for the benefit of our state and its citizens, proves worthy of consideration for this distinguished award. This October the MN GIS/LIS Consortium will host its 25th Annual Conference. Our nomination will demonstrate how the annual conference is one of our core projects, which along with bi-annual workshops, scholarship competitions, achievement awards, event grants and networking events help support our mission.

Virtually every GIS professional in the State of Minnesota has been positively impacted by the MN GIS/LIS Consortium, and the following nomination includes testimonials from several prominent individuals. These testimonials along with the nomination itself will support the immense impact that the MN GIS/LIS Consortium has had on the greater Minnesota GIS community over the last 25 years.

Sincerely,



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Introduction

The Minnesota GIS/LIS Consortium is a collaborative, volunteer-based organization with a long standing and dedicated mission to develop and support the GIS professional in Minnesota for the benefit of our state and its citizens. Since its inception in 1990 the principal method for advancing this mission has been an annual conference. The MN GIS/LIS Consortium's Annual Conference brings together 400-500 GIS professionals, students, and educators from all corners of the state and beyond. This educational, informative, and entertaining conference conveys a sense of community among GIS users in our state. The Consortium conservatively estimates that more than 3000 individuals have benefited from participation in the Conference over the past 25 years.



The Consortium is not a “project” in the classic sense of the word, but rather a collaborative effort to accomplish a multitude of projects throughout the year. These annual projects include:

- The MN GIS/LIS Consortium Conference
- Technical GIS Workshops each spring and fall
- K-12 Teacher Workshops
- Student Scholarship Competitions
- Lifetime Achievement and Leadership Award Recognitions
- Networking Events
- Event Grant Distribution

Made up of volunteers, the Board of Directors and several very dedicated committees work to ensure that events, activities, and expenditures of the Consortium align with its mission to develop and support the GIS professional in Minnesota. The MN GIS/LIS Consortium currently counts nearly 800 GIS professionals and other interested Minnesotans as members.

The MN GIS/LIS Conference

The Consortium's flagship event is the annual MN GIS/LIS Consortium Conference, one of the largest GIS conferences in the country. This three day event brings together 400-500 GIS professionals, casual end-users, students, educators, and vendors from across the state. The Conference, focused on GIS education, typically offers captivating plenary and luncheon speakers, multiple days of concurrent sessions offering as many as 75 informative and educational presentations, panel discussions, map/poster displays, social events, and pre-conference instructive workshops. Along with these opportunities the conference also includes

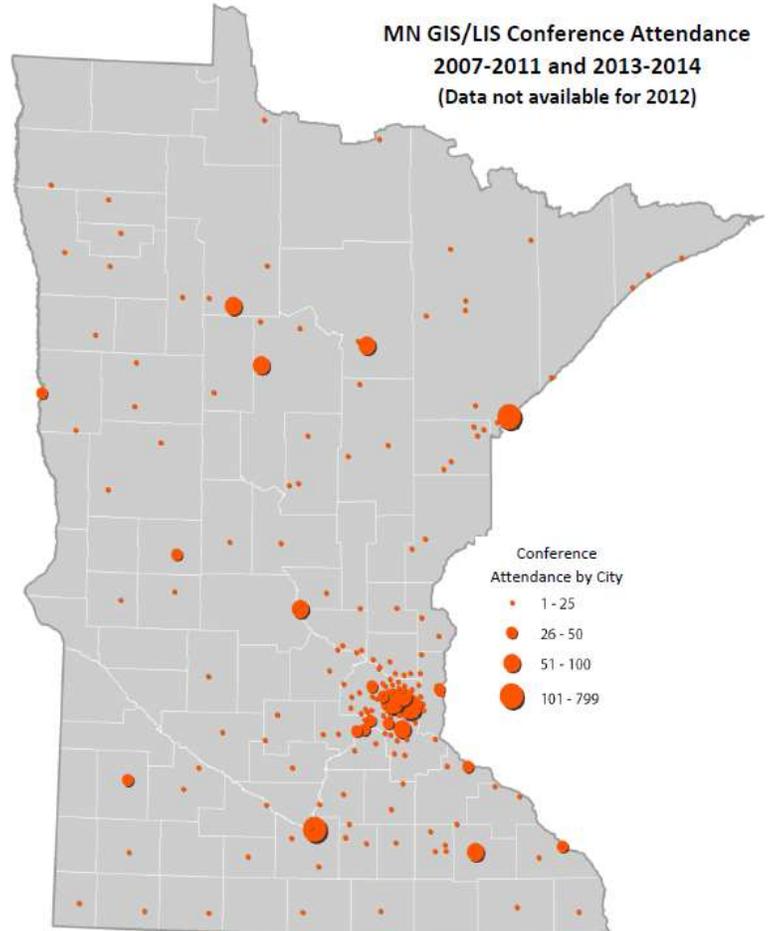
award recognitions for our state’s most influential GIS professionals, scholarships for the best and brightest GIS students in our colleges and universities, and a mentorship program that offers students and young professionals an opportunity to learn from experienced GIS professionals.

The Conference begins with a day of technical workshops. Experts from the Minnesota GIS community share their knowledge with workshop attendees in lectures and hands-on presentations. In a typical year the workshops offer 16 topics from which to choose.

“Attending the fall conference has never let me down. Whether I’m learning about a new technology, presenting, or just networking with new colleagues, there is always a tremendous value.”
- Mike Dolbow, GIS Coordinator,
MN Dept of Agriculture

The following days of the conference consists of intriguing guest speakers, concurrent sessions that provide opportunities to highlight special projects and learn from your peers, panel discussions on emerging technologies and technical policies, displays of paper and interactive maps, technical demonstrations, product demos, and social events. Conference plenary sessions and luncheons have hosted guest speakers with “geo-knowledge” to share from arctic exploration and space travel to canoeing our land of lakes.

In addition to targeting the GIS professional, the Conference supports the future of our industry by providing events and activities specific to GIS academics from kindergarten to higher education. Special workshops and sessions are designed to help K-12 teachers integrate GIS into their curriculum. In fact, beginning in 2014, late afternoon sessions have been added specifically to allow teachers to attend after school and free of charge. A very successful mentorship program connects teachers and college students with GIS



professionals. College students can also attend employer-hosted sessions to assist them with their GIS job search.

During the Conference the GIS community recognizes those who are the state's most influential GIS leaders. Since 1993, the MN GIS/LIS Consortium has presented 25 Lifetime Achievement Awards to individuals who have offered a lifetime of significant accomplishments in the GIS/LIS field. Similarly, in recognition of outstanding mid-career achievement the Consortium has awarded 35 individuals its Polaris Award for demonstrating a beacon of energy and creativity which inspires and guides all GIS professionals in Minnesota. These awards serve to remind its members of the value of contributing to the profession and to our state, inspiring others to work harder and better.

For the best and brightest GIS students in Minnesota colleges and universities, the Consortium awards merit based scholarships. The scholarship program includes a project and presentation competition that is judged and awarded during the Consortium's annual conference. Since 2005 there have been 168 scholarships awarded, totaling \$37,850.

Because this truly is the Minnesota GIS/LIS Consortium, since 1996 conference venues have rotated between St. Cloud, Rochester, and Duluth. The 25th Annual Conference will be held at the Duluth Convention Center in October of 2015.

A Look Back

The first statewide GIS conference was held at the St. Paul Radisson Hotel in June 1990 attracting nearly 300 attendees.

"For most of the people it was the first inkling of the scope of GIS in Minnesota at that time."

- Charlie Parson, Professor Emeritus, Bemidji State University

The conference was an outgrowth of earlier efforts by geospatial professionals from all levels of government to share information among themselves – first by organizing round-table discussions and later with the addition of a newsletter. The group came from many different core disciplines, so they decided to call themselves the Minnesota GIS/LIS¹ Consortium, representing the GIS portion of the planning, engineering, surveying, forestry, geography, and photogrammetry professions. The second conference drew 450 participants and added both workshops and a

¹ LIS stands for Land Information System, the component of Geographic Information System that deals with land records, especially parcel data.

professional management company to assist with conference logistics. Conferences have been held every year since except 1993 when Minnesota hosted a national GIS/LIS conference at the Minneapolis Convention Center; making certain to include a special Minnesota Track to help professionals learn from the great things going on in our state.

Future Direction

The formal mission of the MN GIS/LIS Consortium is *to develop and support the GIS professional in Minnesota for the benefit of our state and its citizens*. Continually, the mechanisms that the Consortium Board and Members apply to meet that goal increases and improves.

Through a student scholar competition the Consortium provides scholarships for GIS higher education to 16 students from 13 colleges each year. That number is continuing to grow as the offering of GIS degree programs increases throughout our state's colleges and universities. Just this year, students from two new schools became eligible to compete. Minnesota State University Moorhead and South Central Community College have added accredited GIS certificate programs to their curriculum, allowing their students to compete for Consortium scholarships.

At the conference there has been an increased focus on student participation. There is a new student assistance program which allows vendors to sponsor students, providing registration and hotel cost assistance. A mentorship program aligns GIS students with willing professionals with whom to engage during and after the conference. A rotating group of GIS professionals have volunteered to share their expertise in a student focus session titled "Finding, Applying, and Interviewing for GIS Jobs."

New for the fall of 2015, there will be an additional full day of workshops geared toward K-12 teachers. The workshops will be free of charge, made possible through a MN GIS/LIS Consortium event grant. The content will assist teachers in understanding GIS and developing

"The MN GIS/LIS Consortium has contributed to our students' success by helping them to develop professionally through many valuable programs and events that they organize and sponsor."

*- Susanna McMaster, Co-Director, MGIS Program,
Department of Geography, Environment & Society, University of Minnesota*

GIS curriculum for their classrooms. After the workshops a networking event is planned to allow the teachers to engage with GIS professionals. For continued support after the workshop,

a database of GIS professionals willing to mentor teachers is in progress. This will allow teachers to seek out GIS professionals in their region who are readily available to help them with GIS any time of year.

The goal of expanding GIS opportunities to all professionals, all students, and all teachers throughout the State has been an essential initiative for the Consortium. A determination to bring its conference opportunities to outstate GIS professionals has resulted in an expansion of its conference venues to a fourth site, Bemidji, for the 2017 MN GIS/LIS Consortium Conference.

Technical Workshops

The Consortium has a well-regarded history of offering high-quality and relevant GIS technical workshops at a reasonable price. These bi-annual workshops are organized by the Consortium and typically hosted at one or more colleges or universities around our state. They provide on-going GIS education on as many as 16 topics and accommodate more than 100 attendees per event.

Through improved communication technology the Consortium is continually expanding the availability of high-quality GIS workshops. Workshops that were once limited to a single venue, and thus to primarily local attendees, are now broadcast across the state. The 2014 spring workshops, hosted by U-Spatial at the University of Minnesota, were broadcast to Mankato and Duluth, allowing interactive participation to a much broader audience.

In 2015 the Consortium has expanded its off-site broadcast workshop locations to include Moorhead and Winona, and has doubled the number of broadcast workshops. The popularity of this program has led to conversations of expanding again next year to include St. Cloud and other locations.

“Without access to the enthusiastic MN GIS/LIS community, the delivery of over 20 K-12 teacher workshops in the summer of 2015 would not have been possible.”

*- Stacey Stark, Director, Geospatial Analysis Center,
University of Minnesota, Duluth*

The addition of GIS to the curriculum of K-12 has added many new and exciting opportunities for the Consortium. The Consortium has aligned with the MN Department of Education to provide free training to K-12 teachers and staff. Since 2013 45 full-day workshops have been held in all corners of our state, with nearly 30 MN GIS/LIS Consortium members teaching the

courses, volunteering to share their knowledge and time to support K-12 GIS education. To date, this initiative has helped to train more than 350 teachers in our state.

Additional Outreach

All throughout the year the Consortium is hosting or promoting GIS events in the state of Minnesota. In addition to the annual conference and bi-annual workshops, the Consortium hosts four networking events to engage members and raise money for scholarships. The networking events are an opportunity for the GIS community to gather in an informal setting to listen to a guest speaker or simply network and share recent GIS experiences with other GIS professionals from around the state and region. These events typically draw 50-75 attendees.

The use of social medial is another tool with which the Consortium is gaining momentum. Recently the Consortium quarterly newsletter has been replaced with a blog that helps GIS professionals stay current with news and events of interest. An active presence on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn also promote a collaborative information flow.

Organization

Nearly from its inception the MN GIS/LIS Consortium has been managed by a Board of Directors elected by the Consortium's active membership. These 14 Board members, composed of representatives from local government, state government, private sector, higher education and the at-large GIS community manage the business side of this 501c3 non-profit organization. It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors to ensure that the actions of the organization are consistent with promoting its mission of advancing the GIS profession in the state of Minnesota.

Membership is open to anyone at no cost. Currently, there are over 800 active members. A membership directory and a variety of informational resources are available on the Consortium's

MN GIS/LIS is an organization selflessly serving the public of Minnesota with vigor and dedication."

*- Robert Werner, Professor Emeritus, Geography,
University of St. Thomas*

web site, www.mngislis.org. The Board and committees use the website, e-announcements, blog and other social media to engage our membership, and to publicize GIS events.

Summary

The MN GIS/LIS Consortium is a mainstay of GIS education, networking, and professional development in Minnesota as well as a respected model for GIS organizations throughout the Midwest. Its greatest success is its membership and its value is defined by its longevity, continued growth, and testimonials of individuals and organizations whose successes can be, in part, attributed to the presence of MN GIS/LIS Consortium.

For the past 25 years the MN GIS/LIS Consortium has been a catalyst for GIS collaboration and education. It has encouraged people to develop professional relationships across disciplines and levels of government, significantly impacting a broad spectrum of GIS professionals, students, and educators. The Consortium has continuously delivered quality education and training programs and supported regular forums for discussion of important issues to Minnesota's GIS users. For these reasons we proudly submit this nomination and believe that all 800 members of this organization are deserving of recognition for their efforts and achievements over the past 25 years.



Mission

To develop and support the GIS professional in Minnesota for the benefit of our state and its citizens.