

# MnGeo Statewide Geospatial Advisory Council

## September 5, 2012 Meeting Minutes

Training Room 2, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 520 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155

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### Attendees

**Members:** Brad Anderson, City of Moorhead; James Bunning, Scott County; Craig Erickson, Minnesota National Guard; David Fawcett, Pollution Control Agency (for Mark Olsen); Rick Gelbmann, Metropolitan Council; Blaine Hackett, Flat Rock Geographics; Doug Hansen, Crow Wing County; John Mackiewicz, WSB & Associates; Stephen Misterek, City of Minneapolis; Ben Richason, St. Cloud State University; Dan Ross, MnGeo; Terry Schneider, MetroGIS; Gerry Sjerven, Natural Resources Research Institute; Michelle Trager, Rice County.

**Non-Members:** Jeff Bloomquist, Farm Service Agency; Dan Falbo, Esri; Brad Henry, University of Minnesota; Mark Kotz, Metropolitan Council; Clint Little, Dept. of Natural Resources (via phone); Tim Loesch, Dept. of Natural Resources; Fred Logman, MnGeo; Nancy Rader, MnGeo; Miles Strain, AeroMetric; Ron Wencl, U.S. Geological Survey

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### Welcome

John Mackiewicz, council vice-chair, called the meeting to order. Participants introduced themselves.

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### Minutes of May 30, 2012 Meeting

**Motion** to approve the May 30, 2012 [council meeting minutes](#) (Schneider/Gelbmann). Motion carried.

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### MN GIS/LIS Consortium Conference

Attendees briefly noted the topics of their conference presentations at the [2012 Consortium conference](#):

- Henry: Bridging the gap between engineering and GIS
- Gelbmann: Now that you have parcel data, what are you going to do with it?
- Hackett: Mobile GIS for community organizations
- Mackiewicz (with MnDOT): Management of fiber optic
- Kotz: Parcel attribute transfer standard; address points for emergency response
- Wencl: Imagery and elevation panels

MnGeo will have a booth in the exhibit hall and staff will give several presentations.

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### 2012 Legislative Session

Logman reported on two areas of activity in the next legislative session:

- **Housekeeping:** An update to language related to MnGeo's move from the Department of Administration to the Office of Enterprise Technology.
- **Data Practices Act:** A revised version of proposed changes to the State's Data Practices Act that were not passed during last year's legislative session (see [handout](#) from the council's Feb. 29 meeting). Based on the results from Pro-West & Associates' June 2011 survey of the status of county parcel mapping, only 15 counties still charge other government units for data; therefore, the fiscal impact of making public data free to other government units may not be significantly large.

Ross added that there will be outreach to local governments to understand any needs, concerns or resistance to these proposed changes. If anyone has comments, please contact Logman. Schneider cautioned that legislators may possibly associate this issue with an unrelated controversy about the collection and use of license plate data.

The revised language will be brought to the council at the November meeting for discussion and a request for the council's support.

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### **MnGeo's Services, Projects and Priorities ([slides](#))**

Ross led a discussion of MnGeo's future direction, asking for extensive advice and input from council members. What should MnGeo's priorities be to better meet the needs of Minnesota's geospatial community? The slides summarized a first-cut of draft priorities and included comments Ross has heard during his conversations with a number of stakeholders.

The slides and discussion were organized by seven main activity areas – the bullet points that follow are the main member comments:

#### **1. Coordination, Outreach, Communication**

- The proposed [Geospatial Commons](#) could be the centerpiece of this area. It's not just for state agencies.
- Use GIS to enhance the state's economy, industry and job growth (go beyond our current emphasis on better delivery of state services). For example, work more closely with [Greater MSP](#) (Minneapolis Saint Paul Regional Economic Development Partnership).
- Currently, many important data layers have no designated steward responsible for their maintenance. We rely on good will to support defacto stewards for some layers; as budgets tighten, it's more difficult for organizations to justify this work. For example, DNR is currently the steward for LiDAR data, but what happens when the acquisition project is over and the funding is not necessarily available? What does being a "data steward" mean? Need to clearly define the roles and responsibilities, including funding. The new geospatial governance process may help with this. Could there be a process template developed that would help others know what to do to be a data steward?
- MnGeo's role may be to ensure the availability of metadata, ETL (export-transform-load) processes, and web services for the priority data layers.
- MetroGIS can provide a useful model: early discussions with the seven metro counties identified overlapping business needs; several were very high priority, e.g., parcels. That layer was tackled first and systems and processes were developed to facilitate creating and distributing a metro-wide layer. Each additional layer then could reuse/adapt these processes. MnGeo intends to build from anything that's working well.
- Should MnGeo be the "primary sales force and advocate for GIS in the state"? No, that language is too broad. All of Minnesota's geospatial professionals do this to some degree. What's most needed from MnGeo is to be an advocate for GIS at the legislature.
- Many users face limits in the areas of software and data availability. The Enterprise License Agreement (ELA) effort helps with software access. Important role is to facilitate getting access to data at its source and getting it to where it's needed. Data is particularly needed about where people work and live; this includes parcel data.
- What motivates people to participate in state efforts? Perhaps with the GDRS, counties will want to participate since it will help with their COOP (continuity of operations planning).

## 2. Data Coordination

- The initial focus will be on the eight foundational data layers in the Minnesota Spatial Data Infrastructure (cadastral, elevation, geodetic control, hydrography, imagery, jurisdictional boundaries, soils, and transportation).
- A service level agreement (SLA) approach used at Met Council may be useful. Build a model / template / process /tools that specify what an SLA looks like and who does what without delving into too many details.
- In MetroGIS's experience, "common priorities" for data were widely shared for about the top 3 datasets, and then there was less and less consensus on what would be the next priorities.
- Add the word "authoritative" to the bullet item about parcels.
- Licensing agreements often limit data use, e.g., street centerlines and parcels.
- At a recent meeting with a group of county CIOs, Ross asked whether MnGeo could help counties come up with a common data license agreement. The CIOs advised to work with the county attorney association from the beginning to get their advice and support.
- Want to build on what already exists not start over.
- Need to break down barriers.

## 3. Technical Coordination

- Issue of interoperability of GIS and CAD software: Is this an inherently government function? (no) It's a very important issue, since it's costly to redo work from one system to another, but the details are the province of the academic and private sectors and of professional organizations. Need to maintain closer links with these organizations. MnGeo may be the "storefront", providing information (libraries /templates /resources) rather than doing the actual work. Include how to incorporate interoperability standards in contracts.
- Issue of harvesting data in business systems, e.g., Computer-Aided Dispatch, linear referencing systems, health systems. MnGeo can raise the issue and provide leadership to drive the private sector to meet interoperability standards.
- Make sure that data is served in ways that are open so it can be used with different systems.
- Huge untapped audience of people who don't self-identify as "GIS users." Open formats are particularly useful for them.
- Need to coordinate/collaborate to move into mobile environment.
- MnGeo's role in the area of technical coordination is to lead and coordinate, not do.

## 4. Data Services

- Provide a single storefront (the Commons) which can be supported by a federated system of services.
- Focus on priority layers.

## 5. Web Services

- Need LiDAR services. DNR has a number of [services](#) already and University of Minnesota is working on this too. MnGeo has added a hillshade layer to its [imagery service](#).
- The function of [GeoService Finder](#) is still important. Many organizations have services that are not publicized and don't necessarily follow a service standard.
- Services need to be documented, maintained and trusted [*note: see [related report about service documentation and trust](#)*]

- Should MnGeo host services for organizations that can't create them? No, MnGeo's role would rarely be to do the work, but rather to provide information on how to do it (or links to that information provided elsewhere), to help to remove barriers, and to promote the availability of services. Consider what "carrots" there could be for organizations to maintain and share services.
- Web services are within the scope of the Commons.

## 6. Training

- It is not a high priority for MnGeo to conduct training. That is generally handled by the academic and private sectors.
- "Educating" may be a more appropriate word than "training" to describe MnGeo's role.
- Provide links to information on standard basic GIS questions, such as how an organization can get started and what software is available.

## 7. Guidance

- Create an environment with authoritative data so that answers to questions are trusted.
- Compile a list of Minnesota case studies to show monetary benefit of GIS.

### Advice on Top Priorities

Given MnGeo's limited resources, what are the top priorities for staff to focus on (note that all projects will be done with partners)? Members were asked to rank order the following 7 possible priorities (see slides 11-18 for details) and to add any additional suggestions – the list below is not in any priority order:

- Minnesota Geospatial Commons
- Delivery of LiDAR/elevation products to the greater geospatial community
- Delivery and implementation of the Statewide Parcel Integration Business Plan
- An ongoing orthophoto program for the state
- Statewide street centerlines
- Statewide addressing standards and tools
- Statewide hydrographic layer

Additional member comments:

- Need more useful, accessible statewide soils layers and landuse/cover layers.
- For many purposes, the integrated parcel data will only be useful if it's updated frequently. Otherwise, people will go back to the source county to make sure they're getting the most recent data. Logman noted that business plan project has found that quarterly updates would meet most needs.
- MnDOT may end up handling the street centerline effort. They're working on a MetroGIS-sponsored pilot project and will be purchasing a new tool to help them meet Next Generation 911 needs for this data.

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### Committees and Workgroups

MnGeo currently has [6 committees, 1 subcommittee and 3 workgroups](#). Committees: Digital Cadastral Data; Digital Elevation (with LiDAR Research and Education Subcommittee); Emergency Preparedness; Hydrography; Outreach; Standards. Workgroups: Geocoding; Geospatial Commons; Metadata.

Questions: How will they align with MnGeo's new priorities? Should each priority area have a committee or workgroup? What happens to any that are not so aligned? Are there any missing? How can their efforts be used more effectively?

Member comments:

- Need a clear written definition of roles, responsibilities and relationships. Clarify how committees are related to the CGIO and MnGeo and to the advisory councils. Define what MnGeo will do to support these groups and what it cannot. Provide more guidance to direct workplans. Clarify reporting structure and process (currently communication is mostly ad hoc). Provide committees more of a say in setting council agendas; distribute preliminary agendas and materials 1-2 weeks in advance; draft and distribute meeting minutes soon after each meeting.
- A group may be a high priority and should receive more support, but if a group focused on a lower priority issue fits MnGeo's plan, it can still fall under the MnGeo umbrella. Don't want groups to simply form on their own – want Council and community to tell us what's needed.
- Each priority could perhaps have a steering committee (would be similar to a workgroup).
- Do we have enough resources to accomplish what we choose as priorities?
- MN.IT management has said we need to be more proactive on standards, so expect more emphasis in this area.
- The focus of emergency preparedness may become ensuring that a well-defined set of data is ready and available for use in emergencies.
- From the perspective of the committees, the best thing to optimize efforts would be clarity on what MnGeo is and isn't going to do, at the project and task level. Committees and workgroups can then align their efforts accordingly and can rely on action on the commitments. Urge MnGeo to say "NO" to lower priorities so that the commitments to the high priorities are achievable and real.

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### **State Geospatial Governance** ([slides 22-26](#)).

The new [IT Governance Framework](#) creates seven Technology Operations Alignment committees, including a new Geospatial Technology Committee. It will be the primary governing body for decisions and policies that impact the use of geospatial technology in the executive branch. As CGIO, Ross will chair this committee. Before November 1, he needs to determine the remaining 10 members and convene the first meeting by November 15. Long-term, this body may possibly replace the State Government Geospatial Advisory Council. It will seek advice and input from external stakeholders, including this Statewide Council.

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### **Governor's Commendation**

No nominations were submitted this year for a [Governor's Geospatial Commendation award](#).

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### **Hot Topics**

- **FOSS4G Conference:** Hackett briefed members on the upcoming [FOSS4G North American Conference](#) (Free and Open Source Software for Geospatial), to be held May 22-24 2013 in Minneapolis at the Marriott City Center. He is the conference's venue chair. The planning committee is exploring coordination options with the MN GIS/LIS Consortium's activities, such as their spring workshops. Anyone is welcome to attend, whether or not they currently use open source software. This is an all-volunteer organization and effort. Esri helps sponsor the conference and has a booth there since some of their products are open source. Hackett

encouraged people to contact him about sponsorship or volunteer opportunities and to tell others about the conference. See [slides](#).

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#### **Information Items and Announcements**

- Loesch noted that DNR's Resource Assessment Unit is acquiring a \$50,000 photography platform for their plane; he does not yet have details about the equipment capabilities and plans for its use. It's possible that this equipment may be available for use in emergency response.
  - **Remaining 2012 Statewide Council Meeting:** November 28
  - Next State Government Council meeting will be September 26, 2012.
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Meeting Adjourned. Notes by Nancy Rader.