

GGAC: Georgia Geospatial Advisory Council

O.C.G.A § 12-5-9 (b)(3)

December 22, 2010

Cc: Georgia Department of Natural Resources | Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Director, Allen Barnes

SUBJECT: Why Digital Mapping (i.e., Geospatial) Activities in Georgia Matter - Executive Summary

Geospatial information and technologies (GIS, GPS, and other technologies) enable us to digitally view, manage, interact with and make informed decisions about our state.

On balance, Georgia has one of the strongest geospatial communities in the country¹. However, due to the spectrum of geospatial capabilities, our talent, data and technologies are not being optimized to realize a base level of intergovernmental coordination and common efficiencies in the delivery of services at the state and local levels. For example, many cities and counties lack the resources and means to notify their citizens of property impacts due to changes in Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRM) because they do not have digital property map data (or other assets) in a geospatial format that can be easily overlain and intersected with digital flood plain map data. Accordingly, our local governments are challenged in executing statewide policy to require property notification lists or execute other place-based concerns. To take the flood-impacted properties example further, many floodplain boundaries are based on dated and/or inaccurate elevation data which can lead to erroneous notifications.

Encouragingly, Georgia is blessed with pockets of geospatial talent and resources, both in the public and private sectors, which can help with solving real-world problems facing the State, such as the following scalable examples:

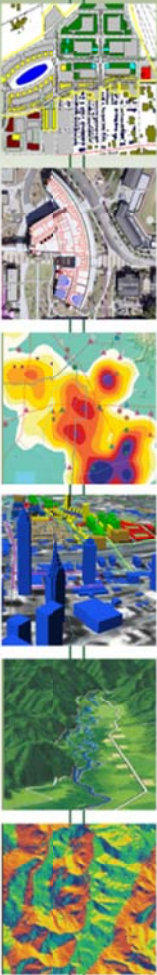
- The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) supported by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and private professional consultants, formed a 2010 multi-agency collaboration to cost-share the acquisition of highly accurate and current elevation data for improved floodplain mapping. Results yielded the removal of ~300 structures from floodplains in Towns County. At the average premium of \$370/yr for national flood insurance, this is a conservative savings of \$111,000/yr for county taxpayers in this rural area.
- Similarly, the Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia recently saved 10 coastal counties over \$5 Million in local tax dollars in acquiring and processing regional elevation data. This was accomplished through an inter-agency coalition which included the DNR, EPD, the National

¹ Georgia Chapter of the Urban Regional Information Systems Information Association (URISA), the Association for GIS Professionals, was recipient of "International Chapter of the Year" Award in 2002 and 2007.

In support of state level policy decisions based on quality data provided by locals

GGAC Representatives:

EPD | GIS@GTRI | GaRCs | ACCG | GMA | DCH | DCA | OPB | DOAS | GFC | Georgia GIS Clearinghouse | GDOT | GAAO
OSA | PSC | GEMA | PSC | UPC | DOR | Workforce Development | Archives | GTA
Georgia Geographic Alliance | GA Assn of Floodplain Mgmt | TAG | esri | GA Power GRC | USACE
HIFLD to the Regions, Southeast | Applied Geographics | GeoTech | Georgia URISA | MAPPS | SAMSOG | ASPRS | GSU
GaSoU | GCSU | GaTech | UGA GITA Southeast | ASCE, Georgia Section | USGS | Water Contingency Planning Task Force



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Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the USGS and private professional consultants. The project cost was \$1.9 Million, of which the State contributed \$200,000. These results will significantly improve floodplain maps and models in this region.

References to many more extensible Case Studies may be found in the forthcoming **2010 GEORGIA GEOSPATIAL AUDIT: STATUS REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS**, to be released by February 2011.

The success of these examples is perhaps best summarized by the U.S. Chief Information Officer, Mr. Vivek Kundra, "Data-management, and particularly **geospatial data-management**, is one of the essential components for addressing the management of the business of government and **for supporting the effective and economical use of tax dollars.**"²

Georgia had vision in the mid '90s for statewide coordinated geospatial activities by establishing the Georgia GIS Coordinating Committee (GISCC) and creating the nation's second State Spatial Data Infrastructure (SSDI) and GIS Clearinghouse web portal.³ Supporting policy intended that these resources "provide a more efficient and effective framework for the planning, budgeting, acquisition and utilization of all State GIS resources."⁴ Subsequently, the GISCC was responsible for streaming federal funding to Georgia for the development of five statewide (and national) digital geospatial base maps which remain valued by many agencies and the public to this day: Boundaries, Transportation, Hydrography, Wetlands and Aerial Photography.

For the past 16 years, the Georgia GISCC's vision has been that all levels of government become highly effective and efficient through the coordination and use of geospatially-related data, standards and technologies. The GISCC has been a valued advisor on sustainable geospatial governance, investments, policies and data-driven decisions influencing Georgia. However, the GISCC has been operating voluntarily with no authority. Therefore, the state lacks many of the components which, *if developed via a framework that would benefit and incent participation statewide*, would provide for "reliable data such as policies, standards, current inventory, state-wide license agreements, business and strategic plans, trained work force⁵, data life cycle support, contract and program management support." These and other needed components are documented in the 2009 Georgia Geospatial Strategic Plan⁶ and **HB 169**.

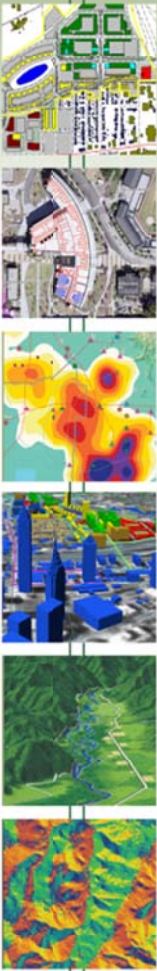
² OMB Circular A-16 Supplemental Guidance, November 2010: <http://www.fgdc.gov/fgdc-news/omb-endorses-a16-supplemental-guidance>

³ Georgia State Spatial Data Infrastructure and GIS Clearinghouse: http://www.georgiaspatial.org/?page_id=36

⁴ http://www.georgiaspatial.org/?page_id=92

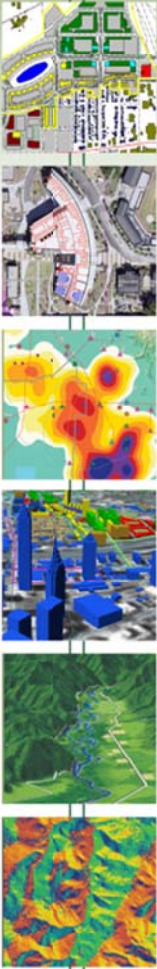
⁵ Kauffman Foundation "SNEI 2008," Nov 2008

⁶ See GISCC SWOT analysis: http://www.georgiaspatial.org/?page_id=16



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Given the need for citizen notification as related to place-based concerns, in 2010 the Georgia General Assembly passed **HB 169** (O.C.G.A § 12-5-9 (b)(3)), creating the Georgia Geospatial Advisory Council (GGAC). The GGAC is charged with “audit[ing] Georgia's geospatial capabilities at county, regional, and state levels.” Additionally, GGAC is to provide “a complete status update and recommendations for utilizing the geospatial capabilities in Georgia to meet FEMA floodplain notification requirements, recommendations for moving forward to achieve governmental data interoperability and enhanced delivery of services to Georgia citizens through the geospatial approach, and any other information determined by the council to be necessary for the advancement of geospatial technology.”⁷ The GGAC is overseen by the EPD Director, Allen Barnes, and is comprised of 43 representatives from state departments and agencies, local governments, the private sector, universities, regional commissions and many other entities across Georgia. It also includes geospatial subject matter experts from GISCC, Georgia URISA, the surveying community, the engineering community, floodplain managers, etc.

Findings from the statewide geospatial audit are currently being compiled and will be presented to the General Assembly by February 2011. The GGAC’s recommendations will be consistent with the intent of **HB 169**. Questions, comments or concerns can be directed through a GGAC representative, the GGAC Chair and/or the EPD Director.

Sincerely,

Danielle Ayan, Chair

Georgia Geospatial Advisory Council (GGAC)

⁷O.C.G.A § 12-5-9 (b)(3) sponsored by Senator Buddy “Earl” Carter (R), District 1, Terry England (R), District 108, Judy Manning (R), District 32 and Alisha Morgan (D), District 39 and supported in Senate by Senator Ross Tolleson (R), District 20, the House Committee on State Planning & Community Affairs (SP&CA), Senate Committee on Natural Resources & the Environment (NR&E). Special interest by Representative David Knight (R), District 126