

NYS GIS Strategic Planning Project Hudson Valley Stakeholder Meeting

Highland, NY

Meeting Date: October 30, 2007

A representative cross-section of different levels of government and the private sector was in attendance (see registration list for names of attendees). The following presents “synthesized highlights” of the discussion that took place at the meeting as recorded by Michael Turner from Applied Geographics, Inc.

Need for continued availability of IR imagery

Participants expressed strong encouragement that CSCIC continue to make color IR imagery available. Interests relate to the importance of those images for natural and biological resource management issues. There was also a stated interest in periodically obtaining access to the stereo-pairs of the underlying aerial photography to support natural resource and wetland delineation.

Large data sets difficult for local governments to handle

Some local governments struggle with very large data sets, particularly imagery.

NYC DEP expressed need for consistent imagery even beyond state’s boundary

New York City DEP noted that NYC’s watershed lands span 8 counties and provide a good use case of why regional data is of interest beyond state government. Currently, some of those 8 counties are in different “orthophoto program years” and thus it is not possible to assemble consistent imagery for a single year, nor resolution across the entire watershed. In addition, a small part of the NYC watersheds are in Connecticut and the NYC DEP would be interested in having that area included as part of the statewide orthophoto program.

Orange County suggests using private entities as potential funding for county-based buy-ups

Orange County created countywide 2 foot contours and noted that there is strong demand from the private sector for those data. The private sector uses the data as part of routine development and planning projects. Orange distributes the data on a town-by-town basis and reported that it has sold between 50-60 DVDs of contour data at \$1,000 /town. DVDs were distributed to each town free of charge with a restriction that the data could not be provided to third-parties. These revenues are of such a magnitude that they could provide a considerable contribution to a countywide buy-up under the statewide orthophoto program. Orange suggested looking to the private engineering and construction community as a funding source for county-based buy-ups. Is there a model where such firms could contribute to a buy-up and thus be “pre-purchasing” the resultant buy-up data?

Dutchess County reports difficulty accessing and assembling local data

Dutchess County identified issues in trying to gain access to data produced by communities within the county. Just as the state has found mixed results in trying to

assemble county data, some counties have had challenges trying to assemble local data. Dutchess also identified that there's a wealth of "project level data" that exceeds the quality of what is available countywide. Hydrography was cited as one example where there are superior local data.

Participants express need for high-quality, statewide wetlands data

Once again, several participants relayed their interest in better wetlands data and their view that the statewide wetlands data is at too coarse a resolution (i.e. only very large wetlands are mapped). Local participants noted that one of the interests driving wetlands data needs is that some local land use controls have stronger wetland regulations than the state does, and even very small wetlands trigger those regulations.

Orange County reports more feasible to provide periodic updates for road centerlines rather than updating through MMNT

Orange County reiterated what we heard for Suffolk County that their E911 system has a pre-defined format for road centerlines and they are committed to updating this data set. As such, providing a periodic batch update is much more feasible than using the MMNT.

Need for local resources to improve accuracy of data prior to public release

One attendee provided an anecdote about the inaccuracy of Fire District mapping available at the statewide level. The fire district map was shown to a local Fire Chief who identified several of the inaccuracies quickly and left the meeting feeling that the GIS was unreliable. This anecdote highlights two points. First, it is critical that the data be as accurate as possible before being made publicly available. Second, it should be made clear that there is a strong interest in improving data and there should be outreach to folks like this Fire Chief in the context of "help us improve the data".

Need for general information and educational resources on local GIS implementation successes

Lloyd, NY reiterated some of the "education challenges" that local government faces in advocating for GIS with local officials that were heard in the Greece workshop. Obtaining general information on successful local government GIS operations has proven difficult to find. Examples of the questions Lloyd has include:

- How are local GIS operations staffed?
- What is the size of a local GIS budget? What funding sources?
- Are there any innovative governance/funding models (e.g. multi-town collaboratives? County support of local GIS efforts? Etc.)

Lloyd made several suggestions for avenues to get this kind of information out there that included:

- Providing state support for this type of education by potentially having a state level "floater person" who can visit with local government and advise on strategies for advocacy and best practices.
- Doing classes at local government trade shows (e.g. NY Association of Towns)

NSGIC 9 criteria good model for counties as well as states

Note: this comment was made during post-workshop conversation and was not made publicly during the workshop. Dutchess County felt that the NSGIC nine-criteria for a successful GIS program was a useful guidance for county government, and not just states. Many counties are facing the same challenges as the state in helping to coordinate their local municipalities on GIS matters. As such, there are potential opportunities for the state to provide the nine criteria as guidance and to support county-based strategic planning to increase effectiveness.

Need for cross-county data standards including templates or GeoDB models

Participants indicated that state sponsored data standards would be useful in promoting inter-county data sharing and aggregation. There also seemed to be consensus that standards that went beyond a simple, non-confrontational document and even included “data layer templates” or ESRI GeoDatabase models would be welcome. In fact, several people indicated that guidance on best practices for common data layers would be extremely helpful.

NYSDOT reports difficulty using tiled, unprojected parcel data from Counties

The local NYSDOT office reported that they occasionally gather local parcel data to support their right-of-way work. In doing this they cited an example of collecting data from Columbia County and finding challenges in working with the individual, tiled CAD files that appeared to be in the wrong projection and would not overlay the orthophotos.

Counties need regular prompting to ensure updates to Data Sharing Cooperative are completed

There was a significant discussion on the currency of the data available via the Data Sharing Cooperative web-site. Several counties admitted that they had not posted their most recent data sets to the Cooperative for no good reason other than being too busy and forgetful. These counties also indicated a willingness to try and do better. One county suggested that something as innocuous as a “quarterly email” reminding Cooperative members of the need to update could be effective in prompting his memory and moving this item to the front-burner. On the other hand, several members of the cooperative complained that the utility of the Cooperative is retarded by “too much dated data”.

Suggestion to modernize methods of posting updates to Data Sharing Cooperative database

There was a related discussion about the time necessary and difficulty of regularly posting data to the cooperative, and several of the more GIS mature counties suggested looking at the newer technologies of database replication and web services as alternative models for data sharing amongst the Cooperative members. Dutchess County explicitly offered that they would be willing to replicate their data with the Cooperative database.

Dutchess County acknowledges Data Sharing Cooperative serves as off-site back-up of data

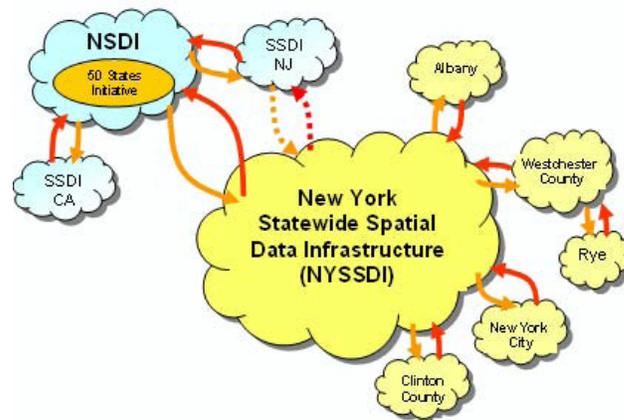
Dutchess County reported that it views “disaster recovery” as an important side benefit of its participation in the Data Sharing Cooperative. The Data Sharing Cooperative provides an “off-site backup” mechanism for key data sets.

Dutchess County reports profitable selling of parcel data and inability to post data in Cooperative database due to potential loss of this income

Ironically, in spite of Dutchess County’s great willingness to share its broader GIS data assets, and its strong public presentation of parcel data via a GIS web viewer, it is not able to share its parcel data through the Cooperative. The GIS personnel reported that parcel data sales are considered a “money maker” by the Real Property and Tax Services department that is responsible for their maintenance. As such, the data are available only for sale for \$1,000 to private entities and for a significantly lower cost to public entities. Other counties have other policies and Ulster County reported that it sells its parcel data for approximately \$30.

Participants report municipal boundary discrepancies and potential E911 response jurisdiction confusion

Several counties reported that municipal boundary discrepancies (both on the maps and on the ground). Counties also provided some good use cases about the importance of these issues. For example where the boundary sits relative to parcels determines taxation. Another example is that public safety response is determined by where a parcel sits relative to a boundary. Under one scenario, an E911 call might come from someone reporting a house fire at their neighbors. However, their neighbor could be in another fire district and the response may need to come from a different jurisdiction than who received the call.



Participants:

Shari Hanofee	(Town of Lloyd)
Gretchen Stevens	(Hudsonia Ltd)
Phil Thibault	(Dutchess Co OCIS)
Daniel Munoz	(Orange County)
Lena Simons	(NYS DOT)
David Lounsbury	(NYC Department of Environmental Protection)
Gretchen Stevens	(Hudson Limited)
Greg Mason	(Lehman College GIS)
Jonathan Tuscanes	(NYCDEP)
Paul Rooney	(ESRI)
Arlene Owen	(Putnam County IT / GIS)
Dongming Tang	(Ulster County Information Services)
Rick Umble	(Ulster County Information Services)
Sandy Avamparto	(Town of Lloyd)
Daniel Munoz	(Orange County)
Barbara Dibeler	(NYC Department of Environmental Protection)
Lena Simons	(NYS DOT)