



Geographic Information Systems Technology News

The newsletter of the New York State GIS Coordination Program

Vol. 1 No. 2

Summer/Fall 1999

A Service of the Office for Technology

Welcome to the Second Issue Of *GIST*!

Welcome to the second issue of the *Geographic Information Systems Technology News (GIST)*, New York State's GIS newsletter. *GIST* will tell you about:

Accomplishments and future plans of the New York State GIS Coordinating Body;

What's new on the NYS GIS Clearinghouse website;

Meetings, training sessions, and educational opportunities;

GIS technology applications in New York State.

The newsletter is also available electronically on the Clearinghouse website

(<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/gis>) and over GISNY-L, our electronic discussion list.

Suggestions and comments are welcome by phone (518/473-5622) or e-mail (boswa@oft.state.ny.us).

Thanks to the contributors to this issue: the Clearinghouse and Communications Work Group (especially Sharon Oskam and Mary Redmond from the State Library), JoAnne Rydzynski (State Archives and Records Administration), and William F. Johnson (Department of Transportation).

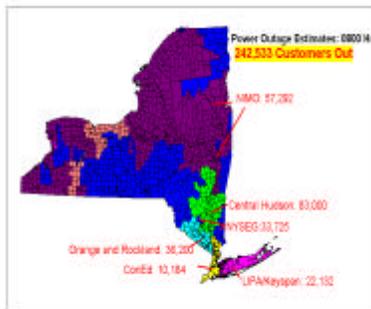
Don't Be Left Out...

Sign up for GISNY-L at <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/gis/listserv.htm#newyork>.

1999: A Very Good Year For GIS

The NYS GIS Coordination Program is closing out the twentieth century with a bang. Here are the highlights of what we've done so far this year:

Power Outage Estimates, Hurricane Floyd, Sept. 18, 1999



Data Sharing. Membership in the NYS GIS Data Sharing Cooperative increased to nearly 195, while the number of datasets available to Cooperative members grew to more than 900 (see page 2).

Digital Orthoimagery. The Program began planning for a new statewide digital orthoimagery program (see page 2).

Digital Raster Files. Digital raster quadrangles produced by the New York State Department of Transportation Mapping and GIS Section are now available to the public at no cost as digital raster files.

Metadata Creation. A dedicated group of interns funded by a Federal Geographic Data Committee grant assisted with the creation of metadata for the State Clearinghouse's Metadata Repository.

Metadata Training. The GIS Coordination Program presented eleven free metadata workshops for over 400 participants across the State in February, April, May, and June. Sessions were held in Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, Long Island, New York City, Plattsburgh, Rochester, Syracuse, Troy, and Westchester County.

Emergency Disaster Assistance. Members of the GIS Coordination Program were among New York State personnel staffing the State Emergency Management Office command post during Hurricane Floyd's rampage in September. Participants produced maps of such critical information as flash flood advisories, power outages, and school district closings.

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Data Sharing Takes Off In New York State



The graph above demonstrates the rapid growth in data sharing.

In March of 1998, the Department of Transportation became the first State agency to place its GIS datasets online. The Office of Real Property Services followed in August, the Adirondack Park Agency in September, and the Department of Environmental Conservation in October. By the end of December, more than 8,500 datasets had been downloaded with a value in excess of \$2,000,000. This represented more than a ten-fold increase in GIS data sharing over previous years. For the first six months of 1999, more than 40,000 datasets were downloaded with a value of \$3,500,000. We may witness a nearly ten-fold increase in 1999.

Overall, more than 900 datasets are available to members of the Cooperative. Of those, over 550 datasets are currently available online through the Clearinghouses.

Recently, Erie County became the first county to put datasets on the New York State Clearinghouse. The county wanted to distribute valuable tax parcel map data to its local governments, but didn't wish to expend its limited resources writing (and negotiating) data sharing agreements and distributing data. The county decided to take advantage of the framework already established by the NYS GIS Data Sharing Cooperative. State Clearinghouse staff worked closely with Erie County to insure that the data were easy to access for members of the Cooperative. Erie County plans to have its local governments join the Cooperative and have all licensing needs handled by the Cooperative's data sharing agreements.

Those wishing to place their datasets online either at one of the Clearinghouses or at their own website should contact Sharon Oskam at the State GIS Clearinghouse at (518) 474-6280 or soskam@mail.nysed.gov.

Coming Soon: NYS Digital Orthos on the Web

Digital Ortho Work Group Chair Tom Hart is putting the digital photos developed by the Department of Environmental Conservation for the national digital ortho quarter quad program in a format that will make them usable for the NYS Y2K Emergency Response Task Force. Tom has been working with staff from the Department of State to radiometrically balance the images, and has selected a system that will allow them to be viewed seamlessly over the Internet. We anticipate that these images will be available on the State Clearinghouse for portions of the State by November.

Sources of GIS Funding

The NYS GIS Coordination Program's Finance Work Group has put together a listing of grant sources for State and local governments wishing to obtain funding to initiate, expand or modify their GIS. Check out the listing of funding sources at <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/gis/gisfund.htm>.

Building a Better Digital Orthophoto Mousetrap

Do you need *current* digital orthoimagery? Are available digital orthoimages inadequate for your needs? Do you wish the State had a program to provide digital orthos on a continuing basis? If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, you have company.

The Digital Orthoimagery Work Group is drafting plans for a new annual statewide digital orthoimagery program. Our goal is timely and useful orthoimagery to meet the needs of State and local government users. The program we have in mind would acquire imagery for a portion of the State every year, and would include digital ortho products at different resolutions, based on localized needs and conditions.

To date, no other State has developed a digital ortho program with the characteristics we want, and the existing Federal program lacks the flexibility and timeliness we need. Consequently, we have to design our own 'better mousetrap.' To accomplish this, the Work Group issued a Request For Information (RFI) in February to the commercial aerial imagery sector seeking ideas and input on the proposed program. We have received eleven responses from firms in NYS and around the country.

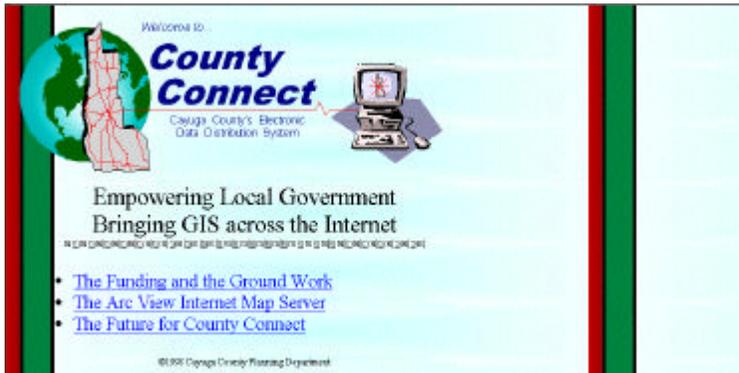
The responses were encouraging. There is a consensus that our proposed program is sound, and that its flexibility will allow us to adapt to technology and to the varying needs of users of different digital ortho products.

The Work Group is continuing to evaluate ideas from the RFI responses, as well as input from work group members, research on what other states are doing, and discussions with Federal mapping agencies. We will provide recommendations later this fall.

Once a draft program specification has been developed, the next challenge will be to seek funding for the program. If all goes well, we may have a new source of digital orthoimagery to support the State's varied GIS users in the years ahead.

For further information, contact Tom Hart at thart@dos.state.ny.us. Meeting reports of the Work Group as well as the RFI can be found on the GIS Clearinghouse website.

Cayuga County Harnesses the Web to Provide Towns with Low-Cost GIS



Cayuga County Home Page

Using only a PC, Web browser and an Internet connection, towns and villages in Cayuga County have the potential to take advantage of the GIS resources and expertise available at the county level.

Working with the Town of Brutus, Cayuga County piloted County Connect, a project that makes key data and GIS applications available over the Internet. "Most of the towns and villages within the county lack the financial and technical resources to develop GIS on their own," explained Bob Brower, Cayuga County Planning Director. "This project lets smaller municipalities benefit from the county's investment at a reasonable cost."

A Simple, but Powerful Tool

To make the system as easy to use as possible, Project Consultant Nick Colas developed a user interface that walks typical users through the steps necessary to display mapped information, download it, and print it out. "New users already familiar with a Web browser require less than one hour of training to begin using County Connect confidently," Colas said.

Brutus Town Clerk Ann Petrus reports using County Connect almost daily. Typical uses include looking up property tax parcel numbers, determining property zoning or land use, and identifying the location of features such as wetlands.

As Petrus uses the system more and more often, members of the town board, planning board, and board of appeals, as well as citizens, are expressing interest in it. With the visual approach provided by GIS, board members can understand conditions and implications better and more quickly than before, and make faster, better-informed decisions, Petrus explained.

Ongoing Support, Future Development

County Connect's initial implementation was funded by a one-year grant of \$50,000 from the New York State Archives and Records Administration (SARA). Generally SARA grants are provided as seed money, with local governments expected to provide continuing support once projects get off the ground.

While the county has yet to determine if it can afford to make the commitments required to continue or enhance the system, Brower, Colas, and Petrus all agree the project was a success and would serve as a good model for enabling smaller local governments to benefit from GIS. County Connect also provided Cayuga County and the Town of Brutus with the opportunity to analyze the various leadership, policy decisions, and financial requirements of complex intergovernmental technology initiatives.

More Information

More information about County Connect is available on the Web at <http://co.cayuga.ny.us/planning/sara/index.html> or from Bob Brower at bbrower@co.cayuga.ny.us or (315) 253-1276. To view the actual interactive maps, you'll need to obtain a user ID and password from Brower.

SARA grant application materials are distributed to local governments in October, with completed applications due February 1. For more information about SARA grants for GIS projects contact JoAnne Rydzynski at jrydzyns@mail.nysed.gov, or (518) 473-2989.

Membership in the Data Sharing Cooperative Nears 200



More than 1/3 of New York's counties have joined the Cooperative

In mid-September 1999, membership in the NYS GIS Data Sharing Cooperative (Cooperative) neared 195. To date, 75 State agencies and 72 county and local governments have joined. On September 15, 1999, New Jersey joined Vermont as the first bordering states to belong to the Cooperative. Federal and not-for-profit agencies are also members.

The NYS GIS Data Sharing Cooperative which was established by the New York State GIS Coordinating Body is a data sharing framework open to government and not-for-profit organizations. There are no fees to join and its goal is to provide a mechanism for the reuse and improvement of existing datasets. For more information about the Cooperative, contact Bruce Oswald at the NYS Office for Technology at (518) 473-5622 or boswa@oft.state.ny.us.

Interested in Subscribing to GIST?

Contact Ms. Terry Remillard at: (518)473-5622 or subscribe on-line at: <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/gis/forms/news.htm>

Editor: Marv Redmond. New York State Librarv

Wanted: Education Work Group Members

If you have an interest in the educational and training aspects of GIS, please consider volunteering for the GIS Coordinating Body's Education Work Group. Meetings will be in Albany or Syracuse.

For more information, check with Education Work Group Chair Lee Herrington at the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry, 1 Forestry Drive, Syracuse, NY 13210; (315) 470-6674; e-mail lpherrin@mailbox.syr.edu

What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?

As you mark the passage from 1999 to 2000, you might give a thought to some members of the NYS GIS Coordination Program who will be participating in New York State's Year 2000 Emergency Preparedness Task Force. They will be onsite at a command post where they have been asked to provide GIS analytical capabilities to enable the State to better respond to potential Year 2000 issues.

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