

**NYS GIS State Agency Advisory Group**  
**Meeting Agenda**  
Virtual WebEx  
October 6, 2020

**Welcome/Roundtable Discussion of Remote Work & COVID-19 GIS Efforts at Agencies.** At this first virtual meeting, the attendees were called on to introduce themselves, and discuss their offices' remote working protocols and note any COVID-19 related GIS activities that the agency has been involved with:

- **Eric Herman – NYSTA:** Since June 8, NYSTA staff have been working alternating weeks in the office and remotely; GIS activities have generally not been COVID-focused
- **David Etere – NYPA:** Scheduling of employees with 1-2 days/week in office; NYPA doing a lot of dashboarding to see where employees are and identify specific problems – using GIS extensively
- **Frank Winters – GIO:** ITS doing a 1/3 rotation into the office (with reasonable accommodation exceptions)/Telecommuting has been extended – waiting to hear how this impacts rotations; Working at 110% productivity w/ big benefits from new flexibility; For NYS, supporting COVID-19 requests as they come in from press office; Also helping DOH geocoding schools and aggregating; Supporting SUNY-ESF to support COVID-19 testing – not the typical datasets (though parcel are coming in handy for sewage testing)
- **John Marino – NYNHP:** iMapInvasives program's GIS capabilities were limited at first – remote access to workstations helped dramatically; Ergonomics is difficult remotely; Nothing specific to COVID-19 mapping
- **Melissa Albino-Hegeman – DEC (Marine Resources):** Doing well remotely with office at 30% capacity (working 1-4 days/week depending on ease/data entry techs are in office since they can't take work home); Not much direct involvement with COVID-19
- **Peter Lauridsen – DOS:** Most are working remotely & with access to computers are 100% functional; Not much with COVID-19 now
- **Anyée Fields – NYSTA:** Working alternate weeks; Not a lot of GIS efforts for COVID-19, but did a lot of volunteer work for DOH hotline
- **Katherine Barnes – DEC (Wildlife):** Working in office part time & home part time
- **Alaina Mallette – Tug Hill Commission:** Not present for this portion of meeting
- **April Marinov – DEC (Emergency Management):** First time attending; In office 1 day/week now; working well, but miss coworkers
- **Barb Cruden – ITS (supporting multiple portfolios):** As of 8/31 at 25% in office with 1 week in and 3 weeks remotely (all staff functioning at 100%); Not a lot of COVID work
- **Mickey Dietrich – Tug Hill Commission:** Was already working remotely (due to several night meetings)/Now 100% from home; Easy to switch to remote since everything is accessible remotely; For COVID-19 THC focused on getting out exec orders, and Zoom support to municipalities
- **Christina Croll – NYS Parks:** Usually at home/GIS staff is 100% remote; 30% of agency staff in office; Field staff work as normal; No COVID-19 work personally, but agency has a lot; Lots of activity in parks
- **Beth Nolan – ITS (GPO):** Frank covered most issues; Has been exclusively working remotely and extremely productive; Helping COVID-19 efforts indirectly with ShareGIS services
- **Gwen LaSelva – DOH:** All DOH is working remotely if they can; COVID activities in other DOH departments
- **Jeff Langella – ITS (GPO):** Per Frank, at Phase 1 return schedule; Finding he's much more productive at home with far fewer distractions; For office in general, there's been heavy work on COVID-19

- **Kate Kiyantsa – ITS (GPO):** Parcel program; Working from home's been great (Teams haven't met in person since March); Working to help get SUNY-ESF access to parcels for COVID-19 work
- **Mark Giddings – DOH (Nutrition):** Mostly remote (1 day/week in office) telecommuting working well with remote desktop; Lots of people deployed for COVID-19 response at DOH
- **Rebecca Newell – DOS:** See Peter Lauridsen's comments (largely remote)
- **Rui Li – U Albany:** New to the group, replacing Jim Mower (retiring); Teaching remotely with some classes on campus; Doing COVID-19 work in research, using DOH data counting to publish data in ArcGIS Online for classes and see how it compares to DOH & NY Times; Also working on project through a grant for identifying health disparities
- **Sanjaya Kumar – DOH:** Unable to respond in virtual meeting
- **Stephanie Rockwell- Canal Corp (Operations):** Working 100% remote & completely productive; No COVID-19 response in office
- **Tim Daly – ITS:** See Barb Cruden's comments (1<sup>st</sup> week back in office)
- **Gerry Engstrom – ITS (GPO):** Public Safety work for Police & Homeland Security; Telecommuting has been great; Prepared an extensive online survey for 911 PSAPs allowing them to note dispatchers out with COVID to share info—done in Survey 123 & a dashboard for backup rollovers
- **Rob Zitowsky – NYSDOT:** Not present for this portion of meeting
- **Carol Hockeson – ITS:** Not present for this portion of meeting

**COVID-19 Coordination at State and National Levels.** Frank noted that at the beginning of the pandemic, he was disappointed that GIS resources weren't being used for highest impact for COVID-19 purposes. Using the Prezi Video tools to give a slide show superimposed on his video, he noted the success story of Dr. John Snow's 1854 map, which identified a water pump as the problem, mitigating effects of the Cholera outbreak in London. Frank noted the significance of resolution in both space and in time, and that resolution of data smooths over important fine details and insights. He used Rockland County as an example, showing that COVID-19 data by zip code is not as telling as by Census Tract, and then Census Block Group, and cells, identifying more anomalies for more analytical power. He also discussed "sewershed" boundaries to test for disease RNA in sewage and trace it upstream to sources.

Frank went on to describe the national efforts taking place, and development of a National Pandemic GIS Playbook, by a group of about twenty people working with OGC. Frank's role as the new President of NSGIC has enabled him to help advance the efforts and has been gaining great momentum and energy on this front.

He also noted how the state's CIRIS application was not designed for a COVID-like emergency. CIRIS has been used extensively for a variety of non-emergency applications but is not really the common operating platform for response. However, the extensive number of data layers that feed CIRIS also feed many other systems, including the other NY Responds platform.

**Tug Hill Commission GIS Platform.** Mickey discussed how he moved to a role with the River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) in 2017, and that Alaina Mallette (with a broad background in QGIS) was hired for GIS work at the Tug Hill Commission last year. She's been able to assist with a good deal of the THC's GIS duties. Around 2010 THC started getting involved with QGIS and a focusing on building a centralized database with PostGIS that feeds QGIS (desktop) and GISCloud (web and mobile) applications. Mickey then walked through process of importing a shapefile in to PostGIS, and adding new layers to the web interface, then creating a form for a data file used to collect data in the field. He then connected to a phone and showed GISCloud's mobile application, collecting data (stored locally, until cell service is available), and showed how the collection feeds the web map. He reviewed the [Tug Hill Map Portal](#), a public site hosted on GISCloud. GISCloud is a commercial product, built off open source.

**Virtual Conferences.** Several virtual conferences were discussed.

- Mickey talked about the QGIS conferences. The NY State conference had several speakers and is expected to be an annual event. It went well, with only a few timing lags involved with the virtual environment. He expects this event to be held in person in the future. The QGIS North America Conference, was a larger event, that went off very well in the remote format.
- Eric noted that the Esri User Conference's virtual format this year allowed for attendance of 80,000 (up from 18,000), and that NYSTA GIS staff were able to attend after an 18-year hiatus from the event. The conference had great energy and interactions. There were several additional bonuses to the format, in that it was easy to rapidly change between sessions, attend important work meetings, and watch missed sessions later. The event was well done and included one-on-one meetings with specific individuals, for custom advise. Melissa agreed that this and other virtual conferences generally work well.
- Eric also noted that although Frank had to drop off the call, the NSGIC Annual Conference was also held remotely this year.

**Data Updates/Services.** Jeff provided an overview of the Building Footprints Web Service that's being hosted at the GIS Program Office. This service has been running for about 6-8 months. Data comes from NYSERDA and Microsoft. NYSERDA data is generally higher quality, with richer attributes, and covers about two thirds of the counties. Microsoft data covers the state but has less info and is about 10 years old. There's been a bit of a lag on the NYSERDA data, due to COVID-19 (and work with universities). The data is available as both map and feature services. An index to the NYSERDA data displays first, then more detail, as users zoom in.

Jeff then discussed the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) services, which recently moved to a new server. Jeff and Tim Daly are the state's NHD stewards. The GPO is in the process of going through each watershed to identify missing water bodies (they've added thousands). He provided a status map of the progress and gave a demo overview of the services. This is currently provided as two map services (one with a solid fill, and one hollow), and he noted the complexities with making this a feature service.

Eric noted that there seems to be a disconnect between the name ShareGIS and the heavily used web services that it provides. People regularly use the GIS services available from the GIS Program Office on <https://gisservices.its.ny.gov>. He reiterated that this *IS* ShareGIS. Beth added that there are actually three sites that are considered ShareGIS, that the <https://elevation.its.ny.gov> and <https://orthos.its.ny.gov> are also a part of this branding.

Kate gave an update about the county tax parcel data. 2019 data is now published for all counties that have it available. She also noted that Suffolk County is now shares with state agencies (it was the final county to do so). Kate went on to note some of the nuances for specific counties. She's working to set up a secure web site for state agencies to be able to securely access the parcel data. Some counties have concerns about ITS providing data requested through FOIL and may start withholding data. She's working hard to encouraging data sharing and standardization. Rockland and Putnam counties will be providing their data publicly in November, bringing the total number of publicly available parcel data sets to 23. She's also reaching out to share data driven analysis of benefits of opening data up to the public.

**NYS Census Response and Data.** Frank was scheduled to discuss this topic, was called out of the meeting. He provided the following links for some Census information, which Eric reviewed briefly:

<https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates/self-response.html>

<https://www.apdu.org/2020/06/10/apdu-member-blog-post-its-not-too-late-to-rebuild-data-user-trust-in-census-2020-data-products/>

**Redefining the Foot/State Plane Impacts.** Eric provided some background on the upcoming changes to the definition of the foot. The US Survey Foot is slightly longer than the International Foot (adding up to about 1' for over 85 miles). Lead by an effort from Michael L. Dennis, an Arizona-based surveyor and geodesist with the National Geodetic Survey, on January 1, 2023 the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will be making the US Foot obsolete. This impacts GIS coordinate measurements. Forty states (including NY) use the US Survey Foot in their State Plane Coordinate Systems. Eric showed a short video on the topic here:

[https://www.ngs.noaa.gov/corbin/class\\_description/NGS\\_Survey\\_Foot/](https://www.ngs.noaa.gov/corbin/class_description/NGS_Survey_Foot/)

Further details about this situation can also be found in this NY Times article:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/18/science/foot-surveying-metrology-dennis.html>

### **Open Forum.**

- Eric passed along that Frank continues to work with wayfinding providers for accurate street data and has been making great progress.
- He also noted that Google has added a new COVID layer to its mobile Maps application. This is being rolled out to accounts on phones over a period of 2 weeks. John mentioned that Esri has also put out the very useful new [COVIDPulse](#) map. Ron Zitowsky mentioned the new [COVID Alert NY](#) smartphone application, to allow for better contact tracing.
- Yesterday, a new quarterly release of NYS Streets and Address Points was posted to the GIS Clearinghouse.
- Jeff mentioned that previous access to Dunn & Bradstreet data is no longer available through the state, but there has been interest in information related to bars, restaurants, religious institutions, etc. If anyone has any leads to data like this, please send it along to Jeff (Jeffery.Langella@its.ny.gov).
- The group reviewed how the virtual format meeting went. Positives included that more people are able to attend, as well as people who have longer distances to travel. The lack of more interpersonal break-time interactions was a drawback.

*The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 2, 2021 from 9:30am-12:00pm at the Thruway Authority, or held virtually, as appropriate at that time. If you have any ideas for topics or would like to provide a demonstration at this meeting, please let us know. Send any questions or concerns about any of these issues to the Advisory Group Chair, Eric Herman at the NYS Thruway Authority (518) 471-5890, or [eric.herman@thruway.ny.gov](mailto:eric.herman@thruway.ny.gov).*