

**NYS GIS State Agency Advisory Group**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
at NYS Thruway Authority, Building 10 & WebEx  
January 10, 2023

**Intro/Roundtable Discussion about Title Series Used by Agency GIS Practitioners.** The group introduced themselves and discussed the title series that are being used in their agencies for GIS work.

- **Eric Herman – NYTSA:** Not supported by ITS, so able to use ITS titles for GIS professionals; previously used Mapping Technologist and non-competitive titles, which have both been phased out; GIS users come from positions with other qualifications (Environmental Analysts, Engineers, Geologists, Real Property Specialists, etc.)
- **Aaron Walters – Canal Corp:** In Real Property Mgt; Mapping Technologist title used for one GIS specialist; others are real estate specialists & admin series is used; interested in more GIS specialists, but struggling to find good candidates
- **Matthew Smith – Tug Hill Commission:** Planner; no dedicated GIS positions – everyone is trained and uses different titles
- **Kate Kiyanitsa – ITS (GPO):** Deferred to Lis DeGironimo
- **D Wu – OAG:** Environmental Scientist; about half of the scientists use GIS/currently exploring other platforms; all GIS users are using the Environmental Scientist title series; lots of great environmental data
- **Gwen LaSelva – DOH:** Use Research Scientists and train them to use GIS software
- **John Marino – NYNH (iMapInvasives):** 3 dedicated technical staff who are Programmer Analysts; Most other staff are Research Scientists and Biologists with GIS expertise
- **Mike Schifferli – NYSHPO:** People in SHPO are in a Historic Preservation titles, Scientists and Archaeologists; deferred to Christina for more on Parks
- **Mickey Dietrich – Tug Hill Commission:** Was GIS Specialist & took on a new role; trained new hires to do GIS work – spread workload, so no dedicated GIS person
- **Nick Mezzadonna – OTDA:** Data Management unit; no dedicated GIS people, but 3 Program Research Specialists that do mapping
- **Robert Sayer – DEC:** In Long Island; Environmental Program Specialist; deferred to Melissa
- **Melissa Albino Hegeman – DEC:** Marine Biologists at Marine Resources do GIS work, some Fish and Wildlife & one Environmental Program Specialist, has heard of other DEC people using Research Scientist title
- **Sean O’Connell – ITS (GPO):** Data Improvement and Clearinghouse group; use mostly ITS title series at the GPO, often with the parentheticals
- **Stephanie Rockwell – Canal Corp:** Mapping Technologist Tech 2 (only dedicated GIS position); Many other titles use the software - engineers, permit coordinators, sounding people, etc.
- **Taylor McKinney – Tug Hill Commission:** No longer have dedicated GIS people; she’s a Project Specialist, many other use GIS and GPS
- **Tim Daly – ITS (DEC):** Use ITS titles for GIS; DEC uses a lot of different titles for GIS—generally program-specific like Biologist, Forester, Environmental Specialist, Research Scientists, etc.; also use partnerships with others that have no overall agencywide GIS title
- **Mari Sango-Jordan – DOH:** NYS Cancer Registry does geocoding of residency of cancer patient with 3 full-time people that has a DBA supervisor and 2 clerks (also another clerk from HRI); these positions allow people to move from the ground up with a HS diploma; Has an [opening](#) right now
- **Anyée Fields – NYSTA:** For pure GIS work, NYSTA uses ITS titles (had changed from a Thruway-specific non-competitive title)
- **Jordan Garrison – NYSTA:** In GIS core team in IT; hired 6 months ago in the ITS2 (Programming) title

- **Molly Jordan – APA:** Has the one GIS title at the APA, as a Mapping Technologist 1; many others use GIS with Environment Program Specialists, Natural Resources, etc.
- **Kevin Hunt – ITS (DOT):** Four people in his group that are in the ITS series; at DOT, many people in agency are in agency-specific titles - Environmental Scientists, Landscape Architect, Transportation Analysts, Engineering, etc.; noted that the Photogrammetry Unit uses Mapping Technologist titles
- **Lis DeGironimo – ITS (GPO):** Everyone uses ITS title series, often using parentheticals; currently have a number of vacancies that they are seeking to fill in a range of these titles; in the process of using selective certification, but having issues (actions are incumbent on hiring manager to handle dishonest people the come from inventory and don't actually qualify), may have to lower standards to get more candidates; HR moved back to ITS, which should make the process smoother; background checks can also slow things down; idea has been floated for a GIS parenthetical to the ITS series; Lis plans to put out monthly messages to listserv about how to get GIS jobs in NY
- **Christina Croll – Parks:** Use Environmental Program Specialist titles and have a Mapping Technologist vacancy; having trouble hiring people with GIS expertise; the PTO exam makes it difficult to find technical people; Parks also uses long-term seasonal titles, but income levels cap out; many program staff (biologists, real estate specialists, stewardship staff, etc.) use GIS too
- **Gabriel Yerdon – Tug Hill Commission:** Joined after this portion of the meeting
- **Peter Lauridsen – DOS:** Joined after this portion of the meeting
- **Rebecca Newell – DOS:** Joined after this portion of the meeting

**Issues Hiring GIS Staff Outside of ITS.** Christina then led a discussion about the difficulties hiring people with proper background if not using ITS titles, and that Lis' messages should be coordinated with other agencies. The group discussed Mapping Technologist titles, which are very specifically written for job duties at DOT, with a focus on Photogrammetry. Although the minimum qualifications are great, it's difficult to justify the title in other agencies. There was some interest in massaging these titles so that they can be better used for GIS. Agencies that have the titles can review the qualifications. Eric suggested including Jeff Barth, head of Photogrammetry at DOT, in the conversation about this title. The last exam for that series was in 2017, and there would be an opportunity for changes before an exam is offered. These lists are quite small. It would be useful to have the exam with 2 focuses—perhaps parentheticals could be added to this title. Kevin noted that a conversation with Civil Service is warranted. Agencies (outside of IT, which supports tools & data) should be able to get the expertise they are looking for when hiring. Maybe ITS titles could be used outside of ITS or other titles within ITS. The group also noted that it would be useful to discuss this with the NYS GIS Association. Career paths are also important. Christina mentioned that DEC is hiring Research Scientists (Geomatics), a non-competitive title that Parks is also considering.

**Web Service Updates.** Kate noted the recently released secure web feature service for parcel data, available only to state government entities. Contact Kate at [Katherine.Kiyanita@its.ny.gov](mailto:Katherine.Kiyanita@its.ny.gov), if you need the username and password. This was greatly anticipated, and well-received. Eric noted that NYSTA initially had issues using this in Esri's Portal application but was able to enter credentials when directly accessing the feature service (instead of the broader listing of services). Kevin noted that there is an agreement that must be signed, that indicates that the data is to be used internally within an agency.

Sean then talked about the newly posted legislative data updates. These were posted on January 3, and reflect the new polygons and representatives that were just sworn in. Older boundaries have been deleted. Molly noted big benefits, now that Census and legislative boundaries line up with each other. The group greatly appreciated the centralized management and dissemination of this data.

**State Contract Issues.** Christina described the problem with procuring GPS equipment. There has been no state contract for these tools since about 2019. GPS hardware was previously available from the Security Contract. She was interested in how other agencies procure GPS equipment. Last year, Parks purchased through a county contract and would love to see equipment listed back on a state backdrop contract. She was also interested if others have experience with leasing equipment. Kevin noted that DOT may be able to assist, since they have an agreement with Leica. He also noted that the state's IT Distributor Umbrella Contract uses resellers, but no one was sure if hardware could be procured this way. Eric mentioned that NYSTA's Buffalo Division used a discretionary purchase. Mickey noted that the Tug Hill Commission and its communities have purchased (Eos Arrow Bluetooth GPS receivers) but was not sure of the procurement process. They've had very good experience with it. Aaron and Stephanie noted that the Canal Corporation had purchased Trimble units through Waypoint Technologies (a NYS small business).

Lis followed up with a discussion about the state's Esri contract. There are 12 state agencies on the current contract, which expires on September 30. A group is working with Esri to go through the licensing needs, and which agencies are interested. In the fall, Esri fell off the state contract list since they didn't have some paperwork finalized. Esri is working on this and has ensured Lis that there shouldn't be any issues with the licensing. *After meeting note: Esri returned to state contract on this same day (January 10, 2023).*

**Agency Plans for Migration from Esri's ArcMap.** With support for ArcMap ending on March 1, 2026, D was interested in understanding agencies' plans for migration to new platforms. They noted that R and Python packages have gotten better for analytical purposes recently, and the OAG is looking at these packages for mapping and data analysis, with some use of ArcGIS Pro. Tim noted that a few people at DEC use and like R, but that this would work for a small handful of users and wouldn't be a primary solution. Web solutions are more likely, as is ArcGIS Pro, with a very large number of people in the agency as current users of ArcMap. DEC is also moving away from Citrix solution for desktop GIS access, as it has proven problematic given the higher end requirements for RAM and graphics cards. VDI solutions are unlikely to work well for ArcGIS Pro. Molly seconded that notion, with past problems with VDI for GIS. ArcGIS Online and ArcGIS Enterprise solutions also come into play. Jordan noted that he had good experience with ArcGIS Pro for analytical work and that R, Python tools, and Jupyter Analytics all are well-incorporated into ArcGIS Pro.

Eric noted recent issues his group has had with ArcGIS Pro and Windows Defender. Antivirus exclusions can work but are risky. He was interested in learning if others have been able to tackle this with other solutions. Tim mentioned that DEC accesses data from Oracle, which does not exhibit this problem, as it is specific to accessing files from a server. Security issues were also briefly discussed.

**Clearinghouse Overhaul & NYS GIS Data Hub.** Sean then provided a preview of the upcoming new look and feel of the State's GIS Clearinghouse, which is undergoing a complete revision. The revision is divided into three basic parts: Who's Who (database of contacts), the Drupal interface (standardized for the state), and the Data Hub. The Drupal Home Page would allow for highlighting current topics and emphasizing new data sets and applications. There will be updated pages for coordination efforts, programs, and an FAQ. He then reviewed the Hub, modeled after the Esri Open Data template, and described the way end users will be able to find and interact with data on this site. The data portion will allow users to preview attributes, download data, and see full metadata, with easy to use search engines. To reduce any duplication of effort, agencies with ArcGIS Online portals (such as Parks & NYSTA) can share their services with the new data hub, which will seamlessly include that data in the interface. The same is true of connections to other data sites (such as Warren County). A variety of spatial filters, customized tags, themes, and categories will make the data easy to search and preview. Sean said that he expects the revised interface to be released by the end of March or early April. He also noted that

the overhaul of the “Discover GIS Data NY” portion of the Clearinghouse will be addressed at a later point. Lis mentioned that the GPO is working with NYS Open Data to have these layers discoverable through Open Data.

**Geospatial Advisory Council Comments.** Eric and Lis gave brief overview of the purpose of the [Geospatial Advisory Council \(GAC\)](#), commenting about how the GAC’s mission is focused on advising the State on effective use of geospatial technology resulting in tangible benefits to NYS. There are representatives from multiple sectors on the Council, and Eric noted the current state government representatives, so that this group is aware of who their advocates are and who to contact: Lis DeGironimo, Eric Herman, Christina Croll, Chris O’Connor, and Sylvie Browne. Eric & Lis also noted that the [NYS GIS Association’s](#) primary focus is for professional development and to advocate for strategic GIS issues and legislation.

**Evolution of the Advisory Group.** Eric noted that he plans to retire in late summer, and that the next meeting (planned for May) will be his last. Christina Croll will be taking on the role of Chair for this group after that meeting.

**Open Forum.**

- Mari noted that there is an upcoming [Cancer Mapping meeting](#), and she will provide that to Eric to forward to the group.
- Anyone interested in participating in a subgroup to discuss Civil Service tiles for GIS work should email Christina at [Christina.Croll@parks.ny.gov](mailto:Christina.Croll@parks.ny.gov).

*A recording of the meeting is here: [Cisco Webex Meetings - Replay Recorded Meeting](#). Contact Eric (email listed below) for the password.*

*The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 23, 2023, from 9:30am-12:00pm at the NYS Thruway Authority Building 10 and via WebEx. 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).*