

Mr. Mark DeMulder
National Map Comments
511 National Center
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
Reston, Virginia 20192

June 28, 2001

Dear Mr. DeMulder:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on “The National Map” report. The vision for providing our Nation with current, accurate, and consistent basic spatial data is important to us and we commend USGS for this effort to lead state and local government agencies to this vision. As you are aware, there is much activity at the state and local government levels to create and maintain spatial information. Minnesota has been very active in creating and sharing spatial information and has several groups that meet on a regular basis to accomplish this. The Minnesota Governor’s Council on Geographic Information, created in 1991, is one of these groups.

Our response is sorted by the categories that you suggested in your letter of May 11, 2001.

Items That Are Useful

- We think that it is wonderful that USGS is talking about a partnership with state and local government. An especially useful aspect is your willingness to accept high quality data when it is available, often higher quality and more detail than what is needed within USGS.
- We are especially pleased to see the inclusion of digital orthophotos and surface elevation data for high resolution applications, since a recent user survey documented that this data is important to our state user community.

Items That Need Improvement

- Need to bring in BLM and their work with cadastral information. If nothing else, BLM’s work on building the public Land Survey Corner Database, as a critical input item to the digital quad map. From our standpoint, this information is the beginning point for building the local parcel data layers.
- It would help to begin documentation of the type of information and the source that USGS expects to work with at the state and local levels. Most obvious is the state DOT’s for the transportation data.

Items That Need To Be Considered

- How will the problem with having multiple horizontal and vertical datums, adjustments and coordinate projections be solved? Will the data be reprojected or transformed to one datum, adjustment and projection?
- In what format will the data be maintained and distributed? Will it be software specific?
- Will high resolution data provided by a state or local government agency be accessed thru a direct link to the local computer server where it is stored? Will the data include the highest resolution data available for a specific surface area?

Items Missed

- Nothing has been said about the working relationship between state, (and local) government and the feds. Past experience has shown this as a one way relationship: the feds set the rules and the locals play them or not at all. This needs to be more of partnership if it is going to work.
- There is talk about land use data, but nothing about the nature of codes. Can this be worked out jointly? The state needs more than a four color map (white=open, green=trees, blue=water, pink=urban). In the earlier LUDA studies, Minnesota wanted to partner with USGS to separate agriculture into two classes (pasture/open vs cultivated). We expected some cost savings if the split were done during the original classification; the response was that USGS would do this for a fee as a second pass, after they had what they wanted from the interpretation.
- Will the National Standard for Spatial Data Accuracy be used for documenting the positional accuracy of the multiple data sets? We did not see the standard defined in the glossary provided with the document.

Implementation Ideas

- Specifically, how will USGS strengthen its coordination with state and regional partners to develop and maintain the National Map? Will USGS do onsite meetings with the local representatives at the Governors Council on Geographic Information Meetings, or at the state GIS Conference, etc.?
- What is the vision for the base map used at the national level for accessing higher resolution data? It is the current Digital Raster Graphic series of the topographic maps or the Digital Ortho Quarter Quads? Or, would current state GIS Base Maps be stitched together as a seamless, national base map?
- Minnesota is quite advanced in a number of areas, including DNRs lake files, DOTs base map, Metro Council's higher level orthos, and the TLG centerline data, We could be a test bed for the concept—including identifying (and possibly solving) the technical, legal, financial, political, and organizational issues associated with implementing The National Map.

The above list of comments and questions are only a start of the dialog between USGS and state and local partners that needs to take place before we can achieve the vision of "The National Map." Again, the Minnesota Governor's Council commends USGS for taking the first step to reach that vision. If you have questions, please call council staff at 651-296-1208 or send electronic mail to gc@mnplan.state.mn.us.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Larry Charboneau,
Council Chair

Enclosure:
Minnesota Governors Council on GIS Membership Roster