

May 15, 2000

The Honorable Martin Sabo
U.S. House of Representatives
2336 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2304

Dear Mr. Sabo,

I am writing on behalf of the Minnesota Governor's Council on Geographic Information to request your support in restoring full funding to U. S. Geological Survey cost-share mapping activities threatened with a reduction in the Interior & Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2001. A proposed decrease of \$2.631 million for Mapping Data Collection & Integration activities will cripple programs of value to Minnesota.

Minnesota's state agencies and local governments work closely with the USGS to coordinate priorities and share development costs for natural resource and earth science data of mutual interest. The state has benefited from over \$10 million of federal matching funds over the past 40 years to produce data about wetlands, elevation, aerial photography and computer readable maps. This information is currently being used by the Department of Natural Resources to help monitor wildfire conditions in the Voyageurs National Park due to heightened concerns after last year's massive blow down. The state Legislature is likely to commit \$300,000 for updated aerial photographs through the USGS National Aerial Photography Program (NAPP) based on a 50% match from the USGS. Innovations in the way water-related data are collected and organized relying on shared responsibilities across governmental units have yielded new state watershed mapping initiatives through the strong support of the USGS and EPA. These, and other programs are jeopardized unless the reduction in cost-sharing funds is reversed.

Although the figure in question is relatively small, the cumulative effect of reductions in cost-sharing resources over past budgets is stifling our ability to reduce needless duplication and cost in public data that serves all levels of government. The Council firmly believes that state/federal cost-sharing cooperatives serve the best interest of the citizens of Minnesota and the nation. Your support to assure that federal funds continue to be available to fuel these important cooperatives is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Larry Charboneau, Chair
Minnesota Governor's Council on Geographic Information

CC: Minnesota Congressional Delegation