

**STATEMENT OF
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION POLICY,
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COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the Geospatial One Stop Initiative. With your permission, I will submit my testimony for the record.

We believe that Geospatial One Stop has made substantial progress in many areas during the year since my last appearance before the Subcommittee, although we believe much work remains to be done. As you know, the Geospatial One Stop Initiative is one of 25 e-government initiatives supported by the President's Management Council and included in the President's Management Agenda. These initiatives leverage technology to better serve our customers, save taxpayer dollars, and make more efficient use of resources at all levels of government.

The e-government initiatives were established to improve the way the federal government manages and coordinates activities and investments. The historically inadequate coordination and duplicative investments in federal geospatial information technology have received much attention over the past year. Geospatial One Stop continues to work with partners at the federal, state, tribal and local level to help improve the way we collectively manage and coordinate geospatial information, activities and investments. Geospatial information and technologies provide critical tools and data for all levels of government in fulfilling their responsibilities to citizens. Federal, state, tribal, and local governments

already collectively invest billions of dollars each year on the collection and management of geospatial data. Geospatial One Stop continues to work with its partners to provide the tools to assist all levels of government in leveraging individual resources so that they are more efficient, more cost effective, and better serve all of our citizens.

Collect once, use many times

Geospatial information now supports an ever expanding range of management and decision making activities by providing credible, accurate, and timely geographic information to policy makers and the public. It allows information to be displayed in an easily understood format that can be used again and again and easily shared among different agencies. When managed properly, geospatial data can be acquired once and used many times. Over the past year – the initial year of operation – the Geospatial One Stop Portal has demonstrated this principle to support a variety of government decisions. Public health, wild fires, hurricane preparedness and other missions have been supported by data organized and accessed through the Internet portal known as “geodata.gov.”

Advances in technology and interoperability standards offer increasing opportunities to integrate, access, share, and visualize a wide range of information from multiple sources. Geospatial technology provides crucial interoperability and sharing of information among the federal, state and local governments in response to emergency situations and planning for the future. Geospatial information allows first responders to quickly analyze an incident and coordinate their response, whether it is the tragedy of September 11 in New York City or, more recently, following real time information in order to respond to hurricanes along the Atlantic Coast or wildfires in the West. Geospatial information provides the tools for governments to manage land and resources effectively, and to visualize alternative options for the future. It helps government, and the public, protect the environment and predict the impact of changing demographics on the future demand for government

services. Geospatial information allows governments to track patterns of crime, disease or even the fraudulent use of government benefits, and assists in the development of appropriate responses. The challenge for all of us is to provide the right incentives and tools to encourage collaboration and partnerships for the most effective and efficient use of geospatial technology.

We are hopeful that as Geospatial One Stop's portal (geodata.gov) continues to grow, we can stimulate innovative partnerships, such as the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD), a consortium of the U.S. Geological Survey, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, that include a shared approach to data development in which each participant shares the cost for a given area. Currently, seven federal agencies and consortia, 27 states, two regional organizations, and five universities participate in this program. The program saves money by sharing in the creation of the data and by using it multiple times to meet specific but diverse mission needs.

Other creative examples include a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) initiated by the State of Utah for the cooperative creation and sharing of digital spatial information. This MOU includes 11 federal agencies, three state agencies and now, Geospatial One Stop.

Goals of the Geospatial One Stop Initiative

Geospatial One Stop has focused on four specific elements that encourage greater coordination and effective partnerships that help avoid multiple investments and allow the sharing of information across jurisdictions and governmental boundaries:

- A Web based portal for one stop discovery of available resources and access to maps, data, and geospatial information and services;

- A collaborative process to develop data transfer standards, promoting greater consistency among data sets and allowing governments to more easily and confidently share data and integrate multiple sources of information;
- An easy-to-access inventory of currently available data collected by federal agencies; and
- A marketplace of planned data investments that will allow state, tribal, and local governments to combine resources with federal agencies on future data acquisitions and investments.

Although governments invest billions of dollars each year in geospatial information and data, the lack of coordinated investment in this valuable asset limits the value of that investment and, in the event of an emergency, wastes valuable response time. Geospatial One Stop has focused on providing a gateway to these existing and planned future investments – at the federal, state, tribal and local levels – accelerating the timeline for developing the consensus standards that facilitate sharing of information, and expanding the collaborative partnerships that help leverage investments and reduce duplication of data.

Geospatial One Stop’s novel Intergovernmental Board of Directors, composed of state, local, tribal and federal representatives, continues to serve as one of its greatest assets. This Board, whose meetings are open to the public, guarantees dialogue among the levels of government that have a major stake in and who are making major investments in geospatial information. In recognition of the substantial investment of state and local governments in the collection and management of geospatial data and the importance of the data they control, this Board is dominated by nonfederal members, although it is chaired by the Department of the Interior.

Currently, the Board includes representatives of the International City/County Management Association; the Intertribal GIS Council; the National Association of State Chief Information Officers; the National States Geographic Information Council; the National Association of Counties; the National League of Cities; and the Western Governors Association, as well as the Departments of Interior, Commerce, Transportation, and the National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA).

The Board's role includes deciding every major policy issue in the evolution of Geospatial One Stop. Additionally, the existence of the Board has also encouraged opportunities for partnerships among all levels of government, even among the federal agencies that serve on it. The Board has asked us to help facilitate communications from the multiple federal agencies involved in geospatial activities, and we are working to provide a single point of contact that can coordinate multiple federal activities and outreach to our intergovernmental partners. We see enhanced communications and the role for Geospatial One Stop as a gateway and facilitator for the many federal initiatives as a key benefit to this innovative approach. Over the past year, Geospatial One Stop has participated in several events and partnership programs to fulfill this facilitator role and that will provides even more opportunities for further collaboration.

Geospatial One Stop represents an innovative approach to federal management. It is an intergovernmental, interagency, collaborative effort, supported by a dozen federal agency partners that provide financial and in-kind resources. The Department of the Interior serves as the Managing Partner on behalf of the White House, with the support of federal partners such as the Departments of Commerce, Transportation, Agriculture, and Defense, NASA, EPA, and the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency.

What We Have Learned

Standards: One of the major challenges to realizing the full value of geospatial information is the lack of technical consistency necessary for sharing and using another's information. To facilitate the sharing of information and reinvigorate the work done over many years by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), Geospatial One Stop led a collaborative effort over two years that included a broad group of people from all sectors of the geospatial community in the development of data exchange standards for commonly needed geospatial data layers (known as framework layers). We are pleased to report that a suite of 13 draft standards, covering these framework layers, has been submitted to a committee of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for their review and eventual adoption as national standards.

These standards are the product of a consensus review process. A notice announcing the availability of these standards for formal public review should be published in the Federal Register soon. The seven major geospatial data themes for which these standards apply are: geodetic control, elevation, orthoimagery, hydrography, transportation (including several sub-themes), and cadastral and governmental unit boundaries. These standards specify the minimal level of consistent data content that data producers, consumers and vendors can use to ensure the smooth interchange of data across organizations. FGDC will solicit comments on the draft standards from the geospatial community in both the public and private sectors to ensure the broadest set of needs are met. At the end of the formal public review period, comments received will be evaluated and any necessary revisions made to the draft standards so they can be again submitted to ANSI. After ANSI approval and formal endorsement, expected in 2005, the published framework data standards and a summary analysis of the changes will be made available to the public.

This is a slow and deliberative process, with ANSI trying to facilitate the opportunity for broad community participation to ensure that the widest possible variety of organizations will adopt the standards.

Over the past 10 years, FGDC has endorsed twenty geospatial data standards developed by FGDC Subcommittees and Working Groups, including: Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Metadata and two Metadata Profiles, Spatial Data Transfer Standard (SDTS) and three SDTS profiles, Geospatial Positioning Accuracy Standards, Digital Orthoimagery Content Standard, Cadastral Data Content Standard, and Utilities Data Content Standard. An additional eighteen standards are in various stages of development.

Geodata.gov, the Geospatial One Stop portal

Since the launching of geodata.gov on June 30 of last year, we have seen tremendous progress in the participation of federal agencies and a growing number of state and local governments who have registered the availability of their geospatial information to the portal. The portal currently includes 1,100 live mapping services, over 11,000 records, and 155 marketplace postings. We believe that geodata.gov's role in making information easily accessible will facilitate sharing by allowing prospective data users to learn about others in the public and private sector that are interested in the same data.

What do these measures mean? Through geodata.gov, officials and citizens can now easily search and find over 11,000 geospatial data resources with thousands more to be added over the next several months. Each of these data sets is documented following the FGDC metadata standards. Ten percent of these geospatial resources are accessible as mapping services that can be integrated in real time. In other words, services from multiple organizations or different levels of government can be

brought together instantaneously to support decisions. This is possible because data providers are adopting interoperability standards and the Geospatial One Stop Portal supports those published industry accepted standards.

Internet-accessible reports allow state and local governments the opportunity to leverage and extend their geospatial dollars through the portal's Marketplace postings of planned investments. The portal currently includes 155 Marketplace postings from federal and state governments.

Geodata.gov receives about 3,800 home page hits per day and 6,600 unique visitors per month. Several innovations to promote the use of the portal include tools that allow for easy registration, automatic updating of metadata published to the portal, to ensure currency of information, and the work of "channel stewards" to seek out and highlight the best available information in each of seventeen topical categories highlighted on geodata.gov. We also have been working with the U.S. Geological Survey's *National Map* to simplify what is asked of state and local governments desiring to partner with either geodata.gov or *The National Map*.

As promised at the launch of geodata.gov, we are moving forward with the procurement for Version 2 of the portal. On June 14, we met with a group of state representatives from the National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC), and have solicited all of the states to get their input on state requirements for Version 2. This meeting was a follow up to an earlier workshop that included federal, state and local participation on portal requirements. We will issue a Request for Comments to solicit additional comments in mid July 2004, and a Request for Proposal, targeted for August 2004. We hope to have version 2.0 up and running in the late Fall of 2004 or Winter of 2005.

The Geospatial One Stop Portal provides an easily accessible and understandable way to share and access information. The portal is available to all governments and the public. It is designed to facilitate communication and the sharing of geographic data and resources among federal, state, and local governments, private sector and non-profit organizations, and private individuals interested in geographic information. As the portal continues to grow, the Geospatial One Stop Portal will fulfill the promise of the initiative to make access to geospatial information easier, faster, and less expensive. Subsequent to my last appearance before this subcommittee, we took your advice and listened to the request of our private sector partners. The Board voted to include access to private sector data through the portal beginning in the summer of 2003.

The Promise of Geospatial One Stop

While we recognize that many barriers and challenges remain until we have a fully integrated system in which geospatial information collection and investment simply and easily meets multiple needs and purposes across all levels of government, we believe that Geospatial One Stop will play an important and continuing role in helping us collectively realize that vision.

In just a short time, we have collected, organized, and are making available over 11,000 records from federal, state and local governments that are currently available to anyone and which can be used to support a wide range of government functions, such as Homeland Security, environmental planning, public safety and health and emergency response. Geodata.gov will continue to grow and add new records, facilitate searching and publishing of geospatial information, encourage coordination and collaboration among different governmental agencies, and we hope will ultimately achieve tremendous cost savings through leveraging of future investment in data. We do not envision Geospatial One Stop as a new federal geospatial program but, instead, as a societal focal point for the multitude of geospatial activities and investments currently taking place at all levels of government

and in the private sector. We are hopeful that this national gateway to data sharing and facilitating communications can lead to future partnerships, collaborations and costs savings.

Conclusion

The Geospatial One Stop Project will support “one stop” access to government and other geospatial data assets and will provide some of the critical building blocks for the development and implementation of a national system for integrating spatial data. The availability of up-to-date and accessible information will help identify geospatial assets, help leverage resources to support a broad range of government programs such as economic development, environmental quality and homeland security. Greater collaboration, sharing of innovative approaches to data integration and easier access to available information will help avoid duplicative investments and allow for sharing of information across jurisdictions to better support decision-making and emergency response.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and look forward to providing you more information as the Geospatial One Stop project progresses. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.