

STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE KAREN S. EVANS
ADMINISTRATOR, OFFICE OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT AND
AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION POLICY,
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, AND THE CENSUS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

June 23, 2004

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to speak at today's hearing on the subject of geospatial information. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Administration's efforts to both maximize Federal geospatial resources as well as partner with industry, state, local, and tribal governments to improve sharing and interoperability in this critical area.

The title of this hearing asks the question, "are we heading in the right direction or are we lost?" I believe we are heading in the right direction based on both the progress achieved to date along with our planned next steps. However, I would like to stress while the progress in the last year is commendable, it is just a start of the work ahead of us. There are significant opportunities across all levels of government to better leverage our geospatial assets.

For the purposes of today's hearing my testimony will highlight some of the progress achieved in the last year and provide additional information on next steps currently under development to more rapidly improve sharing of geospatial information.

Electronic Government and Geospatial Information

As you know, one of the President's E-Government initiatives under the Government-to-Government Portfolio is Geospatial One-Stop. The purpose of this initiative is to provide Federal, state, local, and tribal agencies with single-point of access to map-related data enabling consolidation of redundant data. Its goal is to improve the ability of the public and government to use geospatial information to support the business of government and improve decision-making. The Department of Interior is the managing partner for this initiative with seven other partner agencies (Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, Department of Commerce, Department of Transportation, Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration).

Geospatial One-Stop was created due to overwhelming response from Federal, state, and local stakeholders on the importance of coordinating Federal geospatial resources and collaborating between Federal, state, and local governments. All

communities identified the wide-spread importance of geospatial data across a variety of their missions. Additionally, state and local input highlighted the great difficulty they encountered in trying to simply locate Federal geospatial data.

Within the last year Geospatial One-Stop has successfully addressed some of these goals and improved access to geospatial information. For example:

- Through the Geospatial One Stop portal (www.geodata.gov), anyone can access geospatial information from Federal agencies as well as state, local, and tribal agencies. Launched in June 2003, with over 5,000 data sets (e.g., geospatial data for a specific location, such as flood map data for eastern Maryland). As of 5/3/04, there were 5,885 data sets in the portal with over 4,000 waiting to be validated from the metadata harvesting.
- Through partnership with state and local organizations, Geospatial One-Stop developed thirteen standards to improve interoperability of geospatial data. For example, one draft standard focuses on common definitions for transportation data which will be used to model the geographic locations, interconnectedness, and characteristics of the transportation system within the United States. The transportation system includes both physical and non-physical components representing all modes of travel that allow the movement of goods and people between locations.

Geospatial Policy and Inter-agency Coordination

For many years, OMB has issued guidance to Federal agencies on coordination of geographic information and related spatial data activities through OMB Circular A-16. This Circular provides direction for Federal agencies that produce, maintain or use spatial data either directly or indirectly in the fulfillment of their mission. Some of the general responsibilities for Federal agencies include preparing, maintaining, publishing, and implementing a strategy for advancing geographic information and related spatial data activities appropriate to their mission, in support of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) Strategy discussed below. Additionally, agencies annually report to OMB on their achievements relative to their strategies, and must include spatial data assets within Exhibit 300 submissions (see OMB Circular A-11, sec. 300). Finally, Circular A-16 instructs agencies to use Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) data standards documenting spatial data with the relevant metadata.

Circular A-16 also established:

- A coordinated approach to electronically develop the NSDI. The NSDI is the technology, policies, standards, human resources, and related activities necessary to acquire, process, distribute, use, maintain, and preserve spatial data (e.g., information and process discovery, publishing data, publishing symbol libraries, query filtering, data fusing, Earth imaging, photogrammetry, location processing, and spatial analysis).

- The Federal Geographic Data Committee. The FGDC is an interagency committee responsible for facilitating implementation of Circular A-16 related activities along with implementation of the NSDI. Steve Griles, Deputy Secretary at the Department of Interior is the chair of the Committee. I serve as the Vice-Chair of the FGDC. Members include USDA, DOC, DOD, DOE, HHS, HUD, DHS, DOI, DOJ, State, DOT, EPA, GSA, NARA, NASA, Library of Congress, NSF, and TVA. OMB relies on the strong leadership of this Committee in the development of standards to advance interoperability and information sharing between Federal agencies and among our state, local, and tribal partners.

The Geospatial One-Stop E-Gov initiative and the FGDC have a complimentary and mutually supportive relationship. The FGDC's primary role is leading the development of policies, standards, and training to support the NSDI. Geospatial One-Stop serves as the gateway to geospatial information for all levels of government and the public and it is responsible for harvesting geospatial data from existing sources to be published in the portal. They each have a role to play in coordinating Federal geospatial activities with state, local, and tribal governments. These efforts, along with those led by the Department of the Interior on developing a National Map – a map of our country's geospatial information – are working together to implement the NSDI. Through the National Map, a framework of integrated topographic content is being built and it is this base geospatial information that government and the public need to help support decision-making. The combined work of these three efforts is resulting in a more efficient use of resources at all levels of governments, making it easier and faster for customers to obtain geospatial information they need.

Enforcing Geospatial Coordination through the Budget Process

To promote and enforce Federal geospatial requirements, OMB directed agencies to take a number of additional steps through the FY 2005 budget process. One of these steps directed agencies to identify all grant programs that are related to geospatial information and post the grant announcements in Grants.gov such that they are easily identifiable as geospatial-related grants. Further, agencies are to coordinate the activities of all grant programs that are related to geospatial information through the Geospatial One-Stop team to leverage other agency grants in similar areas.

In the FY 2005 budget process, OMB directed agencies to report all planned geospatial data acquisitions of more than \$500K to Geospatial One-Stop so it could be posted in the GeoData.gov portal in accordance with OMB Circular A-16. Agencies were requested to post metadata for all planned geospatial data acquisitions in the GeoData.gov portal conformant with the metadata standards.

Next Steps on Geospatial Information Coordination

There are a number of critical actions currently under development which will build from the initial progress. These actions include:

1. Consolidation of Geospatial Investments.

The Geospatial One-Stop initiative is currently developing a process to facilitate the sharing of existing and planned investments. Formalization and institutionalization of this process will lead to wiser investments in geospatial data throughout all levels of government. It will also result in the creation of an inventory of existing investments from which redundant investments may be identified and eliminated. Guidance to agencies on identifying and reporting these investments is currently under development at OMB.

Consolidation of geospatial procurement is needed and building from our existing interagency structure, and the processes Geospatial One-Stop is developing, we will have the structure in place to more effectively consolidate purchases in this area. In fact, through the Smart-Buy program led by GSA, we are working with the agencies to review information and software acquisitions for appropriateness for inclusion into this program in order to leverage government purchasing power and reduce redundant purchases.

2. Improving Intra-Agency Geospatial Coordination.

Some agencies, such as EPA and DHS, have established a geospatial information officer. Other agencies do not have a separate position but rather assign the responsibility for geospatial coordination to one employee with other duties. To promote consistency and increase intra-agency coordination, OMB is exploring options to solidify the role and responsibilities of a geospatial information officer at Federal agencies.

3. Continuing to Build Partnerships with State, Local, and Tribal Organizations, and Industry.

The partnerships established by the FGDC and Geospatial One-Stop are essential to our collective ability to improve the sharing and interoperability of geospatial data. We will continue to build on these valued relationships to identify additional opportunities for maximizing our geospatial assets.

Conclusion

The work and accomplishments of the Geospatial One-Stop E-Gov initiative and the FGDC are important strides forward in our ability to leverage geospatial resources throughout the Federal government. Integrating geospatial requirements into the budget process is another key step in promoting more effective use of geospatial resources. While we are heading in the right direction, there are significant opportunities ahead of us to maximize the purchase, use, and sharing of geospatial data to the mutual benefit of the nation. The Administration will continue to work with state and local governments, industry, and Congress in pursuing these opportunities.