

January 5, 2004

PaMAGIC Members and Friends:

I would like to thank all of you for your participation, ideas, and support for PaMAGIC over the past year. We have been able to accomplish a great deal during 2003 in a variety of areas concerning GIS in the Commonwealth. In fact, PaMAGIC has had many significant accomplishments in the less than ten years since its inception, something we can all be proud of. We will be starting 2004 off with an ambitious agenda, and want to continue our momentum into the New Year and beyond.

The last year has brought changes and improvements in the GIS landscape, despite economic uncertainty. GIS is poised to grow in the Commonwealth, particularly as the PAMAP digital orthophotography program takes shape and provides data for all to use. GIS is on the agenda of the new Governor's team with the appointment of a GIS Director and with the use of the technology for Homeland Security and Emergency Management. GIS also promises to be more visible at the county and municipal level.

My work with GeoDecisions allows me to see GIS in operation in other states around the country, and to see how GIS activities are coordinated (or not) at the local and state levels. Pennsylvania should be proud of the focused efforts of our GIS professionals.

I am aware of no other state that combines the volunteer expertise of local government, state government, regional agencies, academia, and business professionals in the way that we do and achieve the things we do. Sometimes we may think that what we are doing does not get noticed, but it does. For example, our work on the Local Government Best Practices has been cited and followed by many other organizations around the country who are attempting to grapple with the same issues we faced.

Our accomplishments for 2003 and goals for 2004 include the following. More information about these initiatives can be found on the PaMAGIC website.

- We have used committees in the past to focus efforts, and have continued that this year with the formation of four PaMAGIC committees or teams. Each team consists of two or more Board members, and we encourage all members to become involved in teams of their choosing. These teams all have initiatives they will be following through on in 2004. These teams/committees are:
 - Policy
 - Technical
 - Communications
 - Administrative
- PaMAGIC has helped to lead the development of PAMAP, the Pennsylvania portion of the National Map. PaMAGIC developed the first draft of the PAMAP Data Content Standards in 2003, and will continue to work towards a full implementation of PAMAP. Board member Rod Brown of Centre County spearheaded the effort to develop the standards from our Best Practices Handbook. We will be working with the state's GIS Director, the DCNR PAMAP Project Office, Pennsylvania Geospatial Information Council (PAGIC), and the I-Team to revise and publish Version 1.0 of the Data Content Standard, and to perform tests of the standards using county data. PAMAP provides a great opportunity for building the vision of a coordinated GIS infrastructure for the state, and jump-starting many local GIS efforts.

- We welcomed the Commonwealth's first executive-level GIS Director in the Office of Administration, Jim Knudson, and have offered our services in support of Jim's efforts. PaMAGIC is committed to voicing our opinion on GIS governance activities at all levels of government, and we look forward to working with Jim at the state level.
- We have continued our meetings and coordination with PAGIC, the state level GIS group. Each group now sponsors two of the four quarterly meetings, and we have continued to work with PAGIC members on issues of mutual interest, such as PAMAP.
- PaMAGIC started a collaboration effort with the County Commissioner's Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) to provide GIS education to county staff. The members of the Policy and Communications teams have been meeting regularly with CCAP staff (along with PAGIC members) to plan these activities, which will culminate with a full-day GIS Forum in February. We will continue to work with CCAP on GIS issues of importance at the county level.
- Thanks to a donation from BAE Systems/ADR, PaMAGIC now has a display board for use at conferences and other venues. Kristin Reinertsen of DCNR has provided material for posting on the display, and the Communications team has already used the display at several events in 2003. Look for this display at conferences around the state, and help us spread the GIS message by providing maps or other material for display.
- PaMAGIC is now recognizing affiliated groups such as local users groups and providing membership discounts. We welcome the Westmoreland County GIS Users Group as PaMAGIC Chapter 1, and encourage other interested groups to contact us regarding membership.
- Our website (www.PaMAGIC.org) continues to be ably managed by the Webmaster, Blair Alegant of the Philadelphia Water Department. We have made an effort to keep information up to date on the site, and encourage you to visit regularly for news of meetings, review of standards, NSGIC meeting reports, etc.
- We will once again be sponsoring the PaMAGIC Info Swap get-together at the PA GIS Conference in May. Eric Jespersen has extended himself each year in putting this together, and it provides a great opportunity for conference attendees to network and unwind. Be sure to vote for the new PaMAGIC Board members in the days leading up to the Conference, and meet the new Board at the Info Swap.

I encourage each of you to renew your membership in PaMAGIC for 2004. The annual dues are still only \$25.00. In addition, the multiple member discounts have been improved for those of you in organizations with more than one PaMAGIC member. In addition, 2004 brings a new benefit of PaMAGIC membership. The national GIS Certification Program begins in 2004, and membership and participation in organizations such as PaMAGIC provide points required for the Contributions portion of the Certification application.

Continue to attend the meetings, voice your opinions, and supply your energy and expertise. GIS in Pennsylvania will be growing faster than ever, and we can all help it grow properly. On behalf of the PaMAGIC Board, I again thank you for your support in 2003, and ask for the same in 2004.

Thank you.

Chris Markel
President, PaMAGIC