

January 26, 2007

Dear PaMAGIC Members and Friends,

There is a lot happening in the Pennsylvania Geospatial community. Statewide imagery and elevation acquired through the PAMAP Program are changing the opportunities we have, the general acceptance of geospatial technologies is growing through the use of Web explorers, and there is a cadre of young professionals providing fresh perspectives and questioning assumptions we've made in the past. This letter is the annual update on PAMAGIC activities, and will hopefully serve to spark communication among us.

As many of you know, the production of **Pennsylvania Geospatial Data Sharing Standards** (PGDSS) has been ongoing since about the year 2000 in one form or another. Most of the time this has not been particularly fun or exciting but it has created opportunities for discussion of thorny issues and for getting in touch with other professionals struggling with the same problems and questions. We made very little progress between August 2005 (when we released version 2.0) and June of 2006. After a "meeting of the minds" in July 2006 to analyze why progress stalled, PaMAGIC made significant changes to the process by which PGDSS development works:

- New versions will be released for individual layers rather than for all layers together,
- Subject Matter Teams (SMT) rather than single "experts" will develop each layer definition, and teams will consist of 3-5 individuals from various sectors of the community,
- The product will be a target data base for sharing rather than paper documents, allowing the use of new technologies for transformation,
- Professional project managers have been hired to keep the process and products consistent and moving to conclusion,
- Each layer will be tested in a simple pilot project to create version 2.5 and the results of the pilot applied to create version 3.0.

We have about 40 individuals serving on the SMT's and they are meeting on a pretty aggressive schedule that started about a week ago. The PA Geospatial Technologies Office in the Office of Administration has provided a total of \$50,000 to make this project stable and active. Board members Rita Reynolds, Kirk Brethauer, and Chris Holmes are leading this initiative and would welcome your ideas and involvement

A direct offshoot of the Common Vision initiative of 2004-05 is the **Map Modernization Advisory Team** (MapMod). We have been partnering with the Governor's Center for Local Government Services in DCED to increase Commonwealth involvement in FEMA's MapMod Program. A group of about 30 individuals from all sectors met in March last year to validate the concept that better communication and joint effort would yield better flood maps and lead to better flood plain management in the long run. The same group has met twice more to advise FEMA on modest changes to the ongoing program, and to understand how information others have could support MapMod. Although a group this size is about all we can manage so far, all involved are eager to expand the base of knowledge and support as soon as possible – last year's floods and a tabled piece of legislation (HB 936) make it clear that this topic is timely. A report on the initial meeting of the MapMod Advisory is under Hot Topics at [www.pamagic.org](http://www.pamagic.org). Feel free to contact Board members Paul DeBarry, Tim Murphy, or myself if this initiative interests you. We are planning some technical sessions at the GIS Conference in May, and a team meeting directly after the Conference.

Our third major initiative this year is to **Increase Communications**. Our website has been cleaned up and its function changed to contain background and historical information rather than community news. The PaMAGIC Yahoo Group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PaMAGIC/>) now serves to pass news and information on a timelier basis, and it is a stable and simple tool for the PA GIS Community. It will be most effective if more people contribute news and ideas. Board members Laura Simonetti, Mike Shillenn, and Kathryn Reed are leading this initiative and welcome your ideas, energy, and especially Yahoo Group postings that connect us and build community.

Legislatively, it will be interesting to see the results of the "Public Utility Confidential Security Information Disclosure Protection Act" passed as **Act 156** late last year; existing maps may contain portions of the

prohibited information. Bills that did not pass included **HB 936** regarding flood map updates and **HB 2871** regarding the creation of a geospatial coordinating council. PaMAGIC has exhibited an abiding interest in the creation of an effective council that shares decision-making in geospatial policy and integrated planning; this bill arrived too late and was controversial enough to let it rest for the last session, but the need remains. Perhaps privacy of personal information will be a catalyst for really examining this need, once more and more comprehensive data is available on the Web (and hopefully before that).

I'd like to personally thank the many organizations and individuals that make up PaMAGIC. In particular, it is very satisfying to work with a diverse and talented group of Board members (see attached list). We meet via conference call about every two weeks and they have been steadfast in pursuit of this year's initiatives. They, and their parent organizations, are a positive example of public service. Other collaborators this year included:

- SEDACOG – which has administered PaMAGIC operations for 10 years
- SSHE schools – led by Tom Mueller of CUP, inventoried certain county data holdings
- CCAP – hosts the PaMAGIC website and our regular conference calls
- Corporate sponsors – finance our Annual Info Swap at the PAGIS Conference
- PAGIS Conference Committee – coordinates sessions and collected dues via their website
- OA/OIT GT Office – engages PaMAGIC regularly and funds the PGDSS development
- County GIS Professionals – broadens our reach and provides SMT members

Thanks are due to many other individuals, and especially to our regular members. The PaMAGIC Mission is *"To provide leadership, coordination, and guidance to enhance the development, use, and access to spatial information and related services in Pennsylvania"*, and the quiet efforts and goodwill of all certainly contribute to the common wealth in that arena. Although the pace is slow and our heads are hard, Pennsylvania is steadily advancing.

You'll notice in the attached membership renewal that dues have increased from \$25 to \$30 this year – our first increase in 6 years and a reflection of our changing economy.

We are looking for ideas to freshen the Annual Info Swap at the GIS Conference. We've favored outdoor venues for the last few but got forced indoors last year, which made us examine the format. Please contact me with your ideas and comments.

Lastly, we will be soliciting nominations for Board members in the next 4-6 weeks. Terms are three (3) years but we examine whether to continue or dissolve each year, knowing that times and needs change as must any organization. Help us maintain a fresh outlook and clear perspective by serving on the Board.

Thanks,

Eric Jespersen  
President 2006-07

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