



PaMAGIC President's Letter – January 30, 2012

Dear PaMAGIC Members and Friends:

I believe we are in an extremely critical time for GIS and increasing its importance in helping steer the future of Pennsylvania. The events (namely Marcellus Shale drilling and flood-related events) of the past several years, today and the next several years are actively shaping the future of our natural environment and economy as I draft this letter. GIS holds an important key in insuring that these activities have the most complete, current, and accurate information as possible. In other words, these activities (along with many others) can be best *informed* by utilizing GIS technologies. As a GIS *Community*, we need to come together and work *collaboratively* for this to happen and to maximize the use of GIS. I firmly believe GIS needs a “seat at the table” as these events are unfolding (and before they are unfolding, for that matter!) and we need to continue to work toward this.

As we are all aware, PaMAGIC (and others) have spent the past 2-3 years trying to enact legislation for the formation of a Geospatial Coordinating Council. This activity continues and the intent is to directly support the aforementioned coordination and collaboration. The current Bill, House Bill 1701, is further along the legislative process than previous legislative attempts. Certain members of PaMAGIC (and others) played a pivotal role in not only drafting the Legislation, but also in related events such as a Hill Day this past Fall in support of the Bill. Again, the time is now for GIS collaboration!

Coincidentally, one of the largest GIS initiatives ever in Pennsylvania, PA Map, has seen its funding dwindle to basically nothing. The PA Map Program is still alive, although it is not nearly what it once was. However, there is still a strong need for this Program or something similar, to ensure we are updating the state base map, particularly as the landscape changes. I am sure many of us have realized the value in the 2009 and 2010 imagery that was procured and shared via PASDA, largely covering areas impacted by both Marcellus and flooding. The Program will continue to coordinate these acquisitions as much as possible, but this is becoming more challenging every day given the lack of funding. Unfortunately, this is happening at a time when it is most important for us to obtain this data. I believe working together, we can turn this around!

To illustrate the potential success when collaboration happens, one needs to look no further than the 2011 PA GIS Conference. As is happening too frequently in this economy, monies for various initiatives are dwindling and Penn State needed to pull out of their usual Conference coordinating role for 2011. PaMAGIC members, and many others from the GIS Community, stepped up to the plate in support of CCAP and we still had a very successful Conference. We are continuing this role in 2012, and I am certain we will once again not only have a successful Conference, but it will be even better than 2011! Please join us in Grantville for this event on May 22-23 and if you would like to assist in Conference planning, you can still do so by contacting a PaMAGIC Board Member or contacting CCAP.



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The 2012 Conference will provide an ideal time for us to continue the aforementioned coordination as there are sure to be topics focused on the critical activities happening on Pennsylvania's landscape. In addition, PaMAGIC is planning on unveiling the "State of PA GIS 2012" report which is currently being developed. As with the Report in 2010, the Report will be a synopsis of GIS achievements and events in Pennsylvania during the last year from a variety of organizations. While the 2010 Report was very positive focusing on accomplishments, this year's Report will focus on both achievements and struggles/needs. The plan is to not only use this Report to document where we are and where we are headed, but also in support of the aforementioned initiatives.

PaMAGIC is also in the process of an organizational restructuring. We are hopeful this transition will be complete by the 2012 Conference. Coupled with this, we are trying to have some improvements in place as far as how we handle memberships. There will be more details about this before and during the Conference, but we think you will find the changes very beneficial.

As mentioned last year, we are continuing to take advantage of social media outlets to convey GIS related news, initiatives and events. We have significantly increased our Facebook usage and we have also established a Twitter presence. Please "Like" or "Follow" us in these technologies and use these to continue your involvement by actively participating. Also stay in touch with these as we routinely post updates regarding the House Bill legislation and other pertinent events and happenings in the GIS Community. Of course, we continue to produce the monthly *MAGIC Matters* newsletter and maintain our web site at www.pamagic.org.

Lastly, we currently have a vacant PaMAGIC Board position. We are always looking for people with an enthusiasm for advancing GIS in Pennsylvania, especially at this critical time. If that describes someone you know, send your nomination to Laura Simonetti at lsimonetti@co.mifflin.pa.us.

Best wishes to all of you for a successful 2012 and beyond. Let's keep the momentum going and please stay involved as we move ahead as a true GIS Community!

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Bialousz", written over a light blue background.

Mike Bialousz

mbialousz@pa.gov

PaMAGIC President, 2011-2012

www.PaMAGIC.org



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2011-2012 PaMAGIC Board

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Vice President

Currently vacant

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