

Date: April 26, 2010

From: Wisconsin Geographic Information Coordination Council (WIGICC)

Re: Proposed Reductions to U.S. Geological Survey Budget

This email discusses proposed cuts to the U.S. Geological Survey's FY 2011 budget and the implications of these cuts for geospatial activities in Wisconsin.

The proposed USGS budget for FY 2011 is \$1,133 million, an increase of \$21.6 million over FY 2010. However, for the National Geospatial Program (NGP) the proposed budget is \$65.9 million, a reduction of \$3.5 million over FY 2010. The proposed reduction would eliminate USGS Partnership funds, which are used to leverage local and state efforts to acquire new geospatial data. In addition, state liaison positions would be impacted in 13 (unspecified) states.

Additional budget and program details can be found in the "Greenbook" at http://www.usgs.gov/budget/2011/greenbook/FY2011_USGS_Greenbook.pdf

As noted in the Greenbook, the NGP is a highly successful program. The benefit-to-cost ratio for the USGS is as high as 15:1 for data acquisition activities under the program. The cuts would result in an annual loss of as much as \$20 million worth of geospatial data, and would undermine the fundamental strategy of maintaining the nation's geospatial data framework. While costs savings are important and understandable in these times, the proposed reduction of \$3.5 million is only a fraction (0.3%) of an overall budget of \$1,133 million, which is itself nearly 2% higher than in FY 2010.

In Wisconsin, NGP funding has been critical to a number of significant data acquisition efforts and geospatial initiatives.

- The 2010 statewide WROC orthophoto project benefitted from \$225,000 of direct NGP Partnership funding. In addition, through the coordination efforts of Dick Vraga, the USGS Liaison for Wisconsin, an additional \$180,000 was leveraged from other federal agencies. In short, the statewide orthophoto project would not have gotten off the ground without the NGP. This is an example of a coordinated effort in which NGP funds have benefitted local, state, and national partners.
- Partnership grants have recently been awarded to the Wisconsin Geographic Information Office and Department of Natural Resources for work on statewide boundary and hydrographic data. These grants, totaling approximately \$90,000, have helped support geospatial activities at a time when state resources are scarce. Without the Partnership grants and the efforts of the State Liaison to obtain this funding, these important statewide efforts would not have been possible.
- A partnership grant of \$38,000 was awarded in 2008 to help create WIGICC (the Wisconsin Geographic Information Coordination Council). In this case NGP funds are helping Wisconsin reach parity with other states in terms of geospatial coordination efforts, in order to participate effectively at a national level through NSGIC (National States Geographic Information Council) and other organizations.
- The NGP has contributed toward many other projects in the state, including LiDAR projects in Dodge, Lincoln, Bayfield and (anticipated) Washington counties, and the 2008 NAIP project.

WIGICC encourages you, individually or through your professional associations, to study this issue and determine what actions, if any, would be appropriate. One possible action would be to contact your Members of Congress, especially members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees which are responsible for approving federal expenditures. In Wisconsin, Senator Herb Kohl is a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior (<http://kohl.senate.gov>) and Congressman David Obey is Chair of the House Appropriations Committee (<http://www.obey.house.gov>). Congressman Obey's 7th District covers much of northwest Wisconsin, so NGP activities in this region of the state would be especially useful in driving home the message.

Such letters have been written by organizations in other states. In addition, NSGIC is encouraging coordination councils and other organizations to communicate and educate others about the proposed budget cuts (<http://news.nsgic.org/2010/02/usgs-cut-will-cause-states-to-bleed.html>).

WIGICC is deeply concerned about the proposed cuts. At the last Council meeting a resolution was passed to solicit feedback from the WIGICC Network on possible actions, including writing letters to Senator Kohl and Congressman Obey. If you have comments, questions, or ideas please contact your WIGICC sector representative (see <http://www.wigicc.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=nlQdsPGHXag%3d&tabid=269> for contact information), or send email to wigicc-council@lists.wi.gov (all Council members) or wigicc@lists.wi.gov (full WIGICC Network).

We also ask that you help educate others in the geospatial community, both within Wisconsin and in other states. Please share this email with your constituents and colleagues to help spread the word and solicit additional thoughts and ideas on this important topic.

About WIGICC: The Wisconsin Geographic Information Coordination Council (WIGICC) is a newly formed organization that serves as a forum and coordinating body for geographic information and technology in the State of Wisconsin. For more information about WIGICC visit our website at www.wigicc.org