

STATEMENT OF
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION POLICY,
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COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the Geospatial One Stop Initiative. With your permission, I will submit my testimony for the record.

As you know, the Geospatial One Stop Initiative is one of 24 e-government initiatives supported by the President's Management Council and included in the President's Management Agenda. These initiatives improve Internet-based technology to make it easier for citizens and businesses to interact with the federal government, save taxpayer dollars, and streamline communications between governments and citizens. Geospatial One Stop is one of these government-wide initiatives that will integrate agency operations and information technology investments to eliminate redundant systems and improve the government's quality of customer service for other levels of government, citizens and businesses.

Each of these initiatives recognizes that there is much room for improvement in the way the federal government manages and coordinates its activities and investments. Geospatial One Stop will address some of these concerns in the area of geospatial information technology, with its

emphasis on making it easier, faster and less expensive for all levels of government and the public to access geospatial information. Geospatial information and technologies provide critical tools and data for all levels of government in fulfilling their responsibilities to citizens. Federal, state, and local governments already collectively invest billions of dollars each year on the collection and management of geospatial data. Geospatial One Stop will help ensure that those investments assist governments in leveraging their individual resources so that they are more efficient, more cost effective, and better serve citizens.

Importance of geographic (geospatial) information to society

Geospatial information has proven enormously valuable to governments at all levels. It is an effective tool in support of management and decision making activities by providing credible, accurate, and timely geographic information to policy makers and the public; its availability offers greater opportunity to integrate, access, and share a wide range of information.

Widespread use of geospatial technology provides crucial interoperability and sharing of information among the federal, state and local governments, particularly in response to emergency situations. Geospatial information allows first responders to quickly analyze an incident and coordinate their response, whether it is the tragedy of September 11 in New York City or responding to wildfires in Florida. Geospatial information provides the tools for governments to manage land and resources effectively and visualize alternative options for the future. Geospatial information helps both the public and governments protect the environment and predict the impact of changing demographics on demand for future government services. It provides important tools for government decision making, and it supports a wide range of economic activity. It can be a powerful foundation for integrating a wide range of seemingly

unconnected information. It allows information to be displayed in an easily understood format that can be used again and again and easily shared among different agencies. When managed properly, geospatial data can be built once and used many times.

Benefits of the Geospatial One Stop Initiative

The Geospatial One Stop project includes four specific elements that encourage greater collaboration to help avoid multiple investments and allow of sharing of information across jurisdictions and governmental boundaries:

- A Web based portal for one stop access to maps, data and geospatial information and services;
- A collaborative process to develop data content standards ensuring consistency among data sets and allowing governments to share data and integrate multiple sources of information;
- An easy-to-access inventory of currently available data collected by federal agencies; and
- A planned data investment marketplace that will allow state, tribal and local governments to combine resources with federal agencies on future data acquisitions and investments.

With billions of dollars invested each year in geospatial information and data, the federal government faces many challenges in taking better advantage of our investments in this valuable asset. Many organizations – both public and private – are investing in geospatial data, but these efforts are not coordinated. Information is often not accessible across organizations or integrated

to support decision making. This occurs not only with federal government agencies but across states and local governments as well. In support of the President's Management Agenda, Geospatial One Stop is intended to rectify this situation by making it faster, easier, and less expensive to access geospatial information, by facilitating the sharing of information, and by planning for future investments and expanding collaborative partnerships to help leverage investments and reduce duplication of data.

Geospatial One Stop represents an innovative approach to federal management issues in many different aspects. It is an interagency, intergovernmental, collaborative effort supported by a dozen federal agency partners that provide financial and in-kind resources. The Department of the Interior serves as the Managing Partner on behalf of the White House with the support of the following federal agency partners:

- Department of the Interior
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Transportation
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Defense

One of its greatest assets is an Intergovernmental Board of Directors, composed of state, local, tribal and federal representatives. This Board helps ensure dialogue among the levels of

government that are making major investments in geospatial information. Based on the substantial investment of state and local governments in the collection and management of geospatial data, formation of this Board is intended to facilitate the ability of governments to leverage their individual resources to become more efficient, more cost effective, and to better serve their citizens.

Currently, the Board includes representatives of :

- International City/County Management Association
- Intertribal GIS Council
- National Association of State Chief Information Officers
- National States Geographic Information Council
- National Association of Counties
- National League of Cities
- Western Governors Association
- Department of the Interior
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Transportation
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration

The Board meets regularly to discuss policy issues related to federal geospatial activities.

Additionally, the existence of the Board has encouraged opportunities for partnerships among all levels of government, even among the federal agencies serving on the Board. Our State and

local partners on the Board have been very supportive of this effort to enhance an intergovernmental geospatial community.

The Board has asked us to help facilitate communications coming from the multiple federal agencies involved in geospatial activities and we are working to provide a single point of contact that can reduce the confusion of multiple federal activities and outreach to our intergovernmental partners. We see enhanced communications and the opportunity for Geospatial One Stop to provide a gateway to the multitude of federal initiatives as a key benefit to this innovative approach.

Our Progress To Date

One of the first issues in providing easier access to geospatial information and greater coordination in the future was to understand exactly what geospatial investments the Federal Government already has made and what investments are budgeted for the future. We are essentially compiling “card catalogues” on both existing federal geospatial data holdings and data acquisition budgeted for FY04. We also have received data inventory information from many state governments, and we hope to capture information from local governments.

A “framework” geospatial data inventory of 256,000 federal data reports (records or “card catalogue entries”), served by 12 federal clearinghouses, has been completed and is currently available for searching through the Geospatial One Stop web site and is displayable through its future portal. These framework data are a subset of the millions of geospatial data records that are served up across 69 federal clearinghouses within the Federal Geographic Data Committee

Clearinghouse Network. In addition, in the next phase of Geospatial One Stop, over 79 existing state and local government clearinghouses will be encouraged to make their framework datasets “GOS” accessible. These framework data sets will then be more easily available as foundations for use with the full spectrum of other geospatial data.

Planned data investments for FY 04 of \$1million and greater have been reported by 7 agencies, with 3 agencies still in the process of reporting. Three agencies report 11 projects at nearly \$56 million in investments. These internet-accessible reports allow state and local governments the opportunity to leverage and extend their geospatial dollars.

The Geospatial Once Stop Portal provides an easily accessible and understandable way to share and access information. The portal will soon be on-line and available to all governments and the public. It is designed to facilitate communication and the sharing of geographic data and resources among federal, state, and local governments, organizations, and private individuals interested in geographic information. Once populated, the Geospatial One Stop Portal will fulfill the promise of the initiative to make access to geospatial information easier, faster, and less expensive.

Recovering geospatial data investments lies in the premise of re-using existing data: invest once, use many times. In order to ensure consistency and facilitate sharing of geospatial information, Geospatial One Stop has supported a collaborative effort to include a broad audience of data developers and users in developing base content standards. Content standards or common requirements ensure data consistency and facilitate data sharing by establishing minimum data

content specifications. A total of 7 teams have been developing a consensus standard on the framework layers:

Standards under development include:

- Elevation
- Orthoimagery
- Government Units
- Hydrography
- Geodetic Control
- Cadastral
- Transportation (*e.g.*, roads, rail, air transit, and waterways)

Draft standards are available for all of these information layers with the exception of Geodetic Control and Cadastral that are under revision based on comments received from the community of users, and Transportation, which is under review to ensure that all “modal” standards do not conflict with each other. Data users in State and local governments have been asked to review the standards to ensure that they will actually meet their needs. Many challenges in the development of these consensus standards still remain and we are working to overcome those problems and develop a set of standards that will allow the sharing and effective reuse of geospatial information.

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standards do not conflict with each other. Data users in state and local governments have also been asked to review the standards to ensure that they will meet their needs. Many challenges in the development of these consensus standards still remain, and we are working to overcome these challenges and develop a set of standards that will allow the productive sharing of geospatial information.

The Promise of Geospatial One Stop

Mr. Chairman, while we recognize that many barriers and challenges remain to a fully integrated system in which geospatial information collection and investment meets multiple needs and purposes across government boundaries, we are optimistic that Geospatial One Stop is making a difference.

In just a short time, we have collected 256,000 federal data sets of information which are available from both the federal and state governments and which can be used to support many government functions, such as Homeland Security, environmental planning, public health and emergency response, to name but a few.

We are close to launching a single federal portal that will provide for searching and publishing of geospatial information, encourage coordination and collaboration among different governmental agencies, and achieve tremendous cost savings through leveraging for future investment in data.

We are in the process of establishing a national network for data sharing and facilitating communications that will lead to future partnerships, collaborations and costs savings.

Conclusion

The Geospatial One Stop Project will support “one stop” access to federal government and other geospatial data assets and will provide the building blocks for the development and implementation of a national system for integrating spatial data. The availability of up-to-date and accessible information will help leverage resources and support programs such as economic development, environmental quality and homeland security. Greater collaboration, sharing of innovative approaches to data integration, and easier access to available information will help avoid duplicative investments and allow for sharing of information across jurisdictions to better support decision-making and emergency response.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today and look forward to providing you more information as the Geospatial One Stop project progresses. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.