

THE SUMMIT

News From and For The Washington GIS Community



WAURISA

The Washington State Chapter of
The Urban & Regional Information Systems Association

Autumn 2005

www.waurisa.org

Issue 1

WELCOME TO THE SUMMIT

Greg Babinski, Newsletter Editor

Welcome to the inaugural edition of The Summit. The Washington Chapter of the Urban and Regional Information Association will edit and publish The Summit, but it is intended to be much more than just the WAURISA newsletter. Our goal for The Summit is to foster the exchange of news and ideas from and for the entire Washington GIS Community.

A panel at the 2005 Washington GIS Conference demonstrated that the community of GIS professionals and users is very diverse and that no single professional organization, user group, software vendor, consultant, or government agency can represent all the needs and viewpoints of the community (See *Spotlight on GIS Organizations at 2005 GIS Conference*, p. 3). The panel members agreed that there would be great benefit from ongoing communication among these groups and interests. The Summit is intended to be one of the tools to help share ideas and information between members of the Washington GIS Community.

Is The Summit intended for you? If you are a GIS professional or a GIS user in Washington State, then yes, The Summit is intended for you. If you are a manager or decision maker responsible for utilizing or implementing GIS technology in Washington State, if you are a consultant or a vendor serving the GIS community in Washington State, if you are an educator, or student, or journalist, or citizen who uses GIS in Washington, then yes, The Summit is intended for you.

If you answered yes to any of the categories listed above, The Summit will need your help and input as well. If you are doing good work with GIS, benefiting Washington business, government agencies, non-profits, or vendors, we need to hear about it. When you make a presentation to your local GIS user group, board of directors, or city council, think about sharing your ideas and activities with The Summit as well. If you face particular challenges or problems implementing GIS, we need to hear about those issues also. We need you to submit news and articles for publication in The Summit for us to achieve our goal for this newsletter.

Why do we call this publication The Summit? A particular mountain is an icon of this state, visible from north and south, east and west. This summit symbolizes our commitment to represent news and views related to GIS from BC in the north to the Columbia River and Oregon in the south, from Idaho in the east to the Pacific in the west. Look at the picture of the summit at the top of this page – from it (on a clear day) you can see great urban areas, natural beauty, water resources, vast forests, and bountiful farmlands. Each of these represents business or policy areas and issues for which we use GIS to influence or support. A summit also symbolizes a way of looking at the world, from above, that resonates with those who use GIS. Lastly, the view from a summit is typically impartial and fair and that is what we intend to be.

Please read through this issue and provide us with your news, views, and suggestions. We hope you find The Summit useful and informative for all you do with GIS in Washington State. 🌲

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Rick Lortz, WAURISA Chapter President

Greetings to the Washington Chapter of URISA membership!

I've just returned from the NW ESRI User's Group Conference in Sun River Oregon. Jack Dangermond gave an inspiring keynote address which illuminated the conference theme of "Across the Great Divides". What I heard was that GIS brings a common tool and a common language to professionals of many different disciplines. They all utilize and value spatial data. This rings especially true for me, a civil engineering tech/drafter doing utility design and mapping for over 30 years. I have been especially fortunate to learn both CAD and GIS software which I have utilized to do what each is uniquely designed for. I believe our common goal to be GOOD DATA, both geometric and tabular.

I wish to express my gratitude for the opportunity to serve as your WAURISA president after having been treasurer since 1999. Here is my agenda as president:

- ❑ Continue to broaden our membership base, passing on the enthusiasm and dedication that has been built up over the years.
- ❑ Develop greater regional representation on the board.
- ❑ Expand our outreach, especially to students.
- ❑ Improve our ability to provide timely and topical educational opportunities.
- ❑ Establish adequate funding for these endeavors as needed.

Our former board passed on a group of enthusiastic individuals who are working hard to bring greater education and collaboration opportunities to our members. We will continue to extend our hand to both the Greater Puget Sound Region and Washington State. This is not limited to GIS professionals, but to all who use GIS technologies. We do this in order to fulfill our goal of understanding your training needs. Then we can work together toward providing it at the least possible cost.

I want to see as many flavors and regions represented on our board. We don't live in a vacuum nor are we islands. We all are faced with the same challenges and issues. The closer we work together, the greater the opportunity to collaborate and the further our budgets go.

I believe we have a duty to provide support and mentoring for those who are learning to use the special tool called GIS. When I teach I learn.

To sum, what I'm about this year is: stable funding, more members, broader regional representation on the board, expanded outreach especially to students, and improving education opportunities.

Mom always said I was spatial... 🌲

LEWIS COUNTY'S GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SERVICES

Stearns Wood, Lewis County GIS Manager



Lewis County GIS was established as a project in 1994, and then as a permanent County function, as a Public Works division and as a core business function of County Government in January 2002. The GIS Division functions as a support unit to the County Commissioners, the other Electeds, the department directors, and the managers and supervisors to provide maps and geographic information as they perform the management, planning, and operation activities of the County's offices and departments. GIS is first responsible for providing GIS applications, services and map products to County offices and departments, and second, provide GIS services to outside agencies, organizations and individuals, at cost, on a time available basis. The GIS is used to obtain and map geographic and location information about the county, and is used specifically in helping perform the needed data gathering, issue analysis, plan and program presentation, and public information phases through preparing and providing maps and data both as reiterative and as final products. Many maps have been provided to county offices and departments as well as to other local and state agencies, to businesses and to the general public. Because of Lewis County GIS's continuing determination for quality and service, and to improve and further its capabilities, in 2002, the County GIS received the "SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT IN GIS" Award at the ESRI User Conference in San Diego, California.

In the ensuing years much has been accomplished. The GIS Division has developed an organization and a system, which supplies all mapping and geographic information needs of the County. In doing so, it has constructed approximately 200 to 300 map layers of land features, and maintains an active Internet website including a comprehensive Map Library for the County and the general public, and an interactive desktop mapping program to provide the current operational data needs of the offices and departments. As GIS is further developed, it becomes more widely used for spatial analysis and modeling of geographic data, planning and decision-making, and other purposes. In order to provide a GIS strategy for the County, the GIS Division recently completed a 2005-2009 GIS Business Plan. Following are primary elements of that Plan:

Lewis County GIS Mission is to produce and distribute quality and timely geographical information and map products to its customers. Its Key Policies are:

1. GIS Map & Map Product Availability - -

To provide for the availability of GIS maps and map products for County and non-County customers through office & department desktop PCs and customer counters, map library & atlases, the County's Intranet and Internet, and in-stock County maps for sale to jurisdictions, businesses, and the public.

Goal 1 – To increase availability of GIS services and products to County offices and departments equal to the geographic map and information needs of county management, planning, and operation; and equal to the needs of non-County customers.

2. GIS Map & Map Product Revenue - -

To provide for the provision of GIS services to County and non-County customers (e.g., cities, districts, agencies, businesses and the general public) and for receiving, where possible, GIS product revenues paid to the County.

Goal 2 – To increase availability of GIS services and products to County offices and departments; and to other jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations; and to businesses and individuals, and the general public, equal to requested need, at cost, and on a prioritized and time available basis.

3. GIS Map, Map Product & Geographic Data Quality - -

To provide for the availability, accuracy and reliability of quality County geographic information through GIS map coverage, data and database maintenance, and established data standards.

Goal 3 - To increase the means to share and exchange quality County information among and between County Offices and Departments, and other outside jurisdictions and entities; and to increase the availability of geographic information and map products via the County's Internet and Intranet web pages.

The GIS development and operation strategic approach of the GIS Business Plan has been structured based on the path it has taken over the past ten years and the direction it expects to take over the next five years. This is as follows:

First Five Years (1994-1999):

- GIS equipment and computer mapping organization built.
- Many Countywide map layers digitally constructed for the 2,446 square miles of county area.
- Maps and map products provided to all offices and departments on an equitable basis.
- A County office and department mapping system network built and geographic-related systems linked.

Second Five Years (2000-2004):

- All County plan and program development processes with maps and map products supported.
- All County management, planning, and operation activities supported.
- A county Addressing Verification-Standardization System built.
- A desktop PC and public counters mapping program and IMS structure built to move GIS mapping technology to offices and departments' PCs.
- Internet web sites for offices & departments & the public, including: a Map Library with a county road map atlas, CRP projects bidding site, and a Small Works Roster; an interactive mapping capability for Assessor parcels, environmental and critical resource lands maps, emergency management & hazard maps, & E-911 dispatching.

Next Five Years (2005-2009) -

- Implement the 2005-2009 GIS Business Plan, containing the 2005-2009 GIS Implementation Program, and the 2005-2006 GIS Work Program.
- Remote access for facilities inventories' digital data sent to outside areas and received from field locations.
- Integrated program data through a relational geodatabase made operational first through Assessor parcel map layer and land records revision and refinement; FEMA DFIRM production and flood control; Emme2 and Mobility transportation modeling.
- Increased use of dynamic graphics and imaging in GIS map products, and of spatial analysis and modeling, including: Lidar & hydrological modeling; land development trends & land absorption rates; floodplain channel migration study.
- Increased GIS support for regional programs, projects, and activities (Regional GIS); specifically for 1) Economic Development; 2) Comprehensive Planning and Growth Management; 3) Transportation and Utilities; 4) Emergency Management & Public Safety Services; and 5) Natural Resources and Environment.

As GIS continues to grow, it will become more possible to provide remote operation mapping, and undertake spatial analysis and modeling for planning, problem solving and operational purposes.

For more information about Lewis County GIS, contact:

Lewis County Public Works Department, GIS Division
350 N Market Blvd, Rm B10
Chehalis, WA 98532-2626
Phone: (360) 740-1486 or (360) 740-1128
Fax: (360) 740-1479, TDD: (360) 740-1480

Web Site: <http://www.co.lewis.wa.us/publicworks/lewisgis.htm> 

KING COUNTY HOSTS GIS WORKSHOP FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

George Horning, King County GIS Center Manager

The first annual "GIS for School Management & Administration Workshop" was hosted by the King County GIS Center at its King Street Center offices on May 26, 2005. The event brought together school administrators from throughout King County to learn how GIS can be applied as a business tool to make school administration functions more cost-effective and responsive to the needs of school district constituents.

The meeting included an overview of GIS technology and examples of how it can be used as a business decision support tool. Presentations included examples of KCGIS Center projects for schools, state-of-the-art schools-oriented GIS applications, and a demonstration of King County's free, public online mapping applications, Parcel Viewer and iMap. A key part of the session was the opportunity for school administrators with an interest in GIS technology to meet one another and share their own experiences putting GIS to work.

Attendees also learned that since the KCGIS Center operates as a separate internal service fund within King County government it provides GIS services for county agencies on an entrepreneurial basis. KCGIS Center representatives described how this model provides an opportunity for other entities, such as school districts, to employ the services of the KCGIS Center. The KCGIS Center has a strong culture of customer service with a focus on deploying GIS as a business tool for a wide variety of customers throughout King County and the region at large.

The meeting concluded with a consensus desire for a follow-up workshop in the spring of 2006 to focus on GIS solutions for school transportation business applications. 🗺️



Voices of the School Administrators

"Demographic data and the tools to interpret it geographically are needed by our district to forecast school population trends."

"We have an old legacy system that does some mapping, but it is costly to support and it can't be used widely by our staff."

"Up-to-date and highly accurate street data for bus routing would be very useful for our school district."



Organizations represented on the GIS user group panel included:

- ASPRS: Puget Sound Region (<http://www.photogrammetry.com/ASPRS-PSR/>)
- British Columbia Chapter of URISA (<http://www.urisabc.org/>)
- Central Puget Sound GIS User Group (<http://waurisa.org/phpBB2/viewforum.php?f=24>)
- Central Washington GIS User Group (<http://www.cwgis.org/>)
- GITA – Pacific Northwest Regional Chapter (<http://www.gita.org/chapters/pacific/pacific.html>)
- Northern Rockies Chapter of URISA (<http://www.intermountaingis.org/>)
- Northwest Washington GIS Users Group (http://www.acadweb.wvu.edu/gis/nwgis_mtg.htm)
- Oregon & Southwest Washington Chapter of URISA (<http://www.orurisa.org/>)
- Spokane Regional GIS Users Group (<http://waurisa.org/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?p=62&>)
- Washington State Chapter of URISA (<http://www.waurisa.org>)

SPOTLIGHT ON GIS USER GROUPS AT 2005 CONFERENCE

Greg Babinski

The theme of the 2005 Washington GIS Conference in Tukwila was "Building Communities." A moderated panel discussion at the conference focused on the community of GIS professionals and users in Washington and the Pacific Northwest (PNW) and the various organizations and user groups that help to support their professional needs.

The goal of the panel discussion was to stimulate dialog between representatives of various GIS-related professional organizations and user groups, as well as to provide a forum for the user community itself to communicate their priority GIS professional organizational needs.

The panel was comprised of representatives from local, state, and provincial chapters of national groups like URISA, GITA, and ASPRS, as well as from unaffiliated local 'homegrown' user groups like CPSGUG, CWGIS, and NW Washington GIS Users. Participants from British Columbia, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington reflected the fact that our business communities and professional opportunities do not end at borders.

Each panel member described their organization's mission, vision for the future, key challenges, and successes. A moderated discussion period followed, focusing on a variety of key questions.

The state has many local grass roots GIS users groups, organized to meet basic educational needs of GIS users. Typically, their focus is on local issues and local networking. Local user groups tend to depend on one or two 'sparkplugs' – dynamic group organizers who can keep things organized and maintain momentum from meeting to meeting. There was agreement that the local user groups can act as 'starter' organization for those new to a region or new to the GIS field. Local GIS user groups can prepare those with the interest and motivation to move up to participation in URISA, GITA, or ASPRS at the state, regional, or national level.

One panel member described a vision of a three-tiered environment with components that each meet the unique needs of GIS users and professionals on a complimentary basis. National URISA, GITA, and/or ASPRS provides the top tier. State chapters provides a coordinating transitional link to local user groups. The local grass roots groups are shoestring operations with no budgets, but they do manage to meet needs on a very local regional basis or even individual counties. Many of the issues discussed by the grass roots user groups are very local in their nature and relate to coordinating local resource sharing that is not really appropriate at a national or even state level. The state chapter does have a budget though and so can support more expensive workshops and the food and refreshments that motivate attendees.

It was agreed that all three tiers of groups (local grass roots, state/provincial, and national) benefited from straddle members – that is members whose interest and participation straddles across two or even three of the tiers. These members seem to be key in helping to ensure that strengths of each tier are leveraged for the mutual benefit of all members of the GIS community. 🗺️



UPCOMING WASHINGTON GIS EVENTS

ACSM – Washington State Section

<http://www.wss-acsm.org/>

Dinner meetings at 6:00pm, third Thursday of the month at Angelo's Restaurant, 1830 130th Ave NE, Bellevue WA.

ASPRS Puget Sound Region

<http://www.photogrammetry.com/ASPRS-PSR/>

Central Puget Sound GIS User Group

<http://waurisa.org/phpBB2/viewforum.php?f=24>

Meetings the third Tuesday of each month from 1:00 to 3:00pm at Mercer Island City Hall. Contact Dick Thomas at: dick@sammplat.wa.org

Central Washington GIS User Group

<http://www.cwgis.org/>

Meets the 1st Friday of each month at the Wok-About Grill, 110 N Wenatchee Ave, Wenatchee, WA at 12:00 noon.

King County GIS User Group

http://www.metrokc.gov/gis/KC_Users_Group.htm

Meets 1st Wednesday of each month at 11:00am at the KCGIS Center, 201 S. Jackson Street, Seattle WA, Conf Room 7044/7045. November 2 topic: ESRI's GIS Training Program, Presenter: Alan Coyle, ESRI Training Coordinator.

Northwest Washington GIS User Group

http://www.acadweb.wvu.edu/gis/nwgis_mtgs.htm

Spokane Regional GIS User Group

<http://waurisa.org/phpBB2/viewforum.php?f=19>

Meets last Wednesday every other month from 12:00 noon to 1:00pm. Contact: Dave Rideout, Spokane County 509-477-7251 drideout@spokanecounty.org

2006 Washington GIS Conference – Date & Venue TBD

<http://www.waurisa.org>

2006 URISA Conference, Vancouver, BC

<http://www.urisa.org>

To have your GIS related event listed in future issues of *The Summit*, notify the editor at: SummitGISNews@yahoo.com.

JOIN THE WASHINGTON GIS COMMUNITY FORUM!

The Summit is not the only communications resource available to members of the Washington GIS Community. Sign up as a member of the Washington GIS Community Forum (<http://waurisa.org/phpBB2/index.php>) and access the latest news about GIS jobs, training, projects, and professional activity in Washington State.

WAURISA SPONSORS

WAURISA would like to thank the following sponsors for their continued support:

- CH2M Hill
- Inside Oregon
- ESRI
- King County GIS Center
- Love GIS
- Weston Solutions

For information about how your company or agency can become a Washington URISA Sponsor, contact Rick Lortz or Steve Schunzel (see contact information below)

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Interested in volunteering your time to help WAURISA? Contact Rick Lortz or any Board member.

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