

Beyond Boundaries

Working together for our common good.

National Spatial Data Infrastructure

A Geospatial Strategy for the Nation

AUTHENTICATED U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION GPO









Our Common Ground

Geography knows no boundaries. It conforms to no jurisdictions other than its own natural laws. Simply put, geography is our common base. It shapes our civilizations and our cultures. It describes the land that is the foundation upon which we all depend for our very survival.



Geographic or geospatial data is the language of the landscape. It provides knowledge about our land and our communities, and helps put events and issues into context. In reality, every event occurs at some physical location, and this position-based knowledge can help us maximize our natural resources, minimize the destruction of fire and floods, improve public safety, and reduce crime.

Our communities — whether towns, cities or counties — are built in layers of social and physical infrastructure that have related layers of data. At the bottom are bedrock, soils, sewers, subways and transmission lines. In the middle we might find people, streets and highways, buildings, rivers, farmlands, forests and deserts. Above we find air, atmosphere and aircraft.

In today's increasingly complex society, geospatial data and services must be easy to access across city, county and state boundaries. If we collaborate on data collection and use, we can maximize our knowledge and leverage our resources to build a common base of geospatial data that can be used by many people for many applications. Having a common ground of geospatial data gives us the ability to make more informed decisions that improve our quality of life.



Our Common Vision

Over the past several decades, computer technology has transformed paper maps into digital images — making geographic or geospatial information about the natural world more useful.



Whether managing resources for the long-term or responding to time-critical events, government agencies and other organizations must be able to access and integrate information at the community, regional, national and global levels. Today, geographic information systems (GIS) let us integrate, analyze and manage information about locations in ways never before possible.

Recognizing the need to improve the collection, management, accessibility and use of geospatial data, the idea for a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) came into being to promote a consistent way of sharing data throughout all levels of government, the private and non-profit sectors, and educational institutions. The NSDI upholds standards and provides a base of relationships among data producers and users that facilitates data sharing.



The Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) is the federally-mandated group created to foster the development and implementation of the NSDI among Federal agencies and the non-Federal sector.









The vision of the NSDI is that current and accurate geospatial data will be readily available on a local, national and global basis to contribute to economic growth, environmental quality and stability, and social progress.

Our Common Benefit

Geospatial data is clearly a national asset — an essential requirement for nearly every program at every level of business, including both the public and the private sector.



Building the infrastructure of NSDI is a mission for all of us. Data produced and served according to NSDI policies, practices and standards becomes part of the common infrastructure and increases the value of America's data resources.

So how do we contribute to and maximize the value of this asset? While the FGDC has been tasked by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) with fostering the development of the NSDI on a national level, it is the contributions from all sectors of society that will make the NSDI a truly dynamic and rich resource for the nation. "Think Nationally, Act Locally" is a good way to envision your participation in building the NSDI.

The FGDC champions the following activities to guide participation in and contributions to building the NSDI:

- Following endorsed geospatial data standards for the collection, integration and exchange of data
- Using the Metadata Standard to document and maintain an organization's data holdings
- Establishing an NSDI clearinghouse network, accessed through the Geospatial One-Stop Portal (www.geodata.gov), to facilitate the sharing of data
- Working collaboratively to build a common base or framework of data that can be used by many people for many applications
- Encouraging the formation of partnerships to share in the cost, responsibility, and



rewards for collaborative data collection

Consistent implementation of the common practices and standards developed for the NSDI benefits us all. While the FGDC leads the federal coordination, successful implementation of the NSDI will only be achieved through the collective actions of many individuals and organizations from all levels of society. That's where you come in.





Our Common Future

Our nation's economic, social and environmental future depends on the sound use of land, water, subterranean, atmospheric and human resources.

If we can achieve a common vision of accurate, accessible geospatial information for the nation, we can help transform the way that all organizations address these complex issues in the 21st century.

Public and private institutions are committing resources and making important long-term decisions concerning the collection, management and use of spatial data. These actions are influenced by current pressures, priorities, and opportunities, but their ultimate success depends on how these spatial data activities will be relevant to future needs and demands.

We have an opportunity to shape the future of geospatial data. Working together today, we can build the geospatial foundation for tomorrow. Sharing the responsibility for addressing common interests for the common good is what the NSDI is all about.

Help shape the future. Be a part of the team that's building the National Spatial Data Infrastructure.

For more information on the National Spatial Data Infrastructure and the work of the Federal Geographic Data Committee, visit the FGDC Web site at **www.fgdc.gov**

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Federal Geographic Data Committee

