

SSGIC

General Meeting

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Central California Interagency Communications Center - Porterville, CA

Participants

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Overview

The Southern Sierra Geographic Information Cooperative (SSGIC) is an interagency cooperative with five primary stakeholder agencies, Bakersfield BLM, CDF-Tulare unit, Kern Co. Fire Dept., Sequoia National Forest, and Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks. The project's primary goal is to develop a landscape scale framework for interagency fire management planning. Initiated with Joint Fire Sciences Program (JFSP) grant funding which ended in 2002, the SSGIC continues to support this goal. The goal of this meeting was to review and provide feedback to the progress made in data development, present web server status and needs, and plan upcoming GIS training. *Action items are in italics.*

Status Review

Pat Lineback reviewed the current status of the SSGIC including a review of the program goals for 2004. These include significant data development, the update of several fire analyses, increased website functionality, and GIS/SSGIC training to fire staff. He also reiterated the need to seek funding to continue the United States Geological Survey (USGS) support of our web server following the expiration of the current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in August of 2004. Orlando Raez was introduced. Orlando is a GIS technician and has been funded through FY2003 Fire Program Analysis (FPA) for 34 weeks to develop and improve SSGIC data.

Data Development Review

At the October 2003 SSGIC meeting, three datasets were identified as critically in need of improvements and having complex development issues. A team approach to these data was adopted. Team leads presented current progress.

Enhanced Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) - Larry Vredenburg and Chuck Dickson are the leads for this dataset. Larry presented a sample dataset created by linking county parcel data to assessor's improvements data and selecting parcels with improvements greater than \$0.00. He also created a one kilometer buffer around the center of these parcels as an alternative approach. Issues include 1) the lack of knowledge of where structures are located in large parcels, 2) the possibility that a lower limit of dollar value greater than \$0.00 should be used to eliminate very minor improvements, and 3) not knowing how "improvements" are defined.

Although this approach needs more tweeking, there was very positive feedback on this approach. Discussion included the need to determine if this data is to be used both for planning and operations, as these have different needs. The planning goal need is to identify areas meeting the federal definition for WUI's (based on housing densities of greater than one residence per 40 acres), but not included on the current federal listing. Operationally, identification of all parcels with homes or structures is important. One dataset could meet both these needs. Kern and Tulare counties have provided their data. Release of the Tulare county assessor's data required SSGIC agreement to secure assessed values from the public. *We need to coordinate with the FireSafe councils in the development of this data. Data from Fresno County needs to be acquired.*

In summary, the short term goal is to improve the State/Federal WUI that is now used for planning. This is the SSGIC goal for FY2004. The longer term goal is to develop finer resolution data that locates individual structures and their locations. This is a much greater workload that will require much more effort. It was recognized that some agencies (e.g. Kern County FD) have an immediate need for this finer resolution data and are already working on this longer term goal.

In addition to private parcels with improvements, the federal agencies need a dataset identifying areas of high "life value", those areas with high visitor use. This would be maintained in a separate dataset as they don't meet the current definition of WUI.

Fuels and vegetation – Karen Folger is the lead. Karen presented a review of vegetation and fuels datasets and vegetation classifications currently in use. In 2005 or 2006, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks will complete their new vegetation dataset using the National Vegetation Classification System (NVCS). The Mineral King drainage is now complete. The USFS California region has nearly completed a high resolution vegetation map of the entire state using the CalVeg classification system. *SSGIC will accept Karen's recommendation to use the USFS CalVeg dataset for all but the park and merge this with the park dataset. Park NVCS codes will be crosswalked to CalVeg.* To update the Fire Return Interval Departure (FRID) analysis, Fire Return Intervals (FRI) will need to be assigned to CalVeg vegetation types. *Tony Caprio will develop this data.*

An updated fuels dataset will be derived from the vegetation dataset. Implementing an expanded fuels classification scheme was discussed. *The consensus was to use the 13 Anderson codes this year and reevaluate next year.* Several methodologies are currently in use to predict fuels from vegetation type. This has resulted in inconsistent fuel code assignments across jurisdictional boundaries. *Karen will evaluate these methodologies recommend a consistent process across the SSGIC.*

A lengthy discussion ensued on change detection following management activities and natural events such as wildfires. The first task is to identify activities which alter the vegetation and/or fuel type. Diane Travis noted that the forest service is implementing a new activities tracking application, the Forest Activity Tracking System (FACTS), designed to track these activities. It might be adapted for interagency use. The second task is to develop the logic and models to describe the changes that occur over time. *Karen will evaluate a short term strategy to implement this year. SSGIC will actively support long term approaches to developing regional and/or national solutions.*

Land Status – Lead, Heidi Hosler, could not attend the meeting. Larry Vredenburg described the complex issues surrounding lands issues. These range from fraudulent surveys, implementation of updated Geographic Coordinate Database (GCDB) section corners, unresolved ownerships, etc. The BLM is the identified repository of lands data and maintenance is ongoing. Updates brought to their attention are promptly implemented. *The SSGIC will download the current dataset and each agency will review the data and submit any changes to the BLM via Larry.*

Orlando Raez reviewed the draft trails dataset he has developed. It can be viewed on the website at http://ssgic.cr.usgs.gov/SSGIC/Viewers/ss_html40/viewer.htm?title=Watershed%20Overview%26extent=SSGIC%20Watersheds%26Service=ss_draft_trails. *Each agency will review the trails data and should provide any comments and/or corrections to Orlando by February 27, 2004. These will be incorporated into the final dataset.*

Website update

Anne Birkholz presented an update on the website. Several new map services have been developed. These include:

- ✓ SSGIC - Draft trails
- ✓ Sequoia National Forest - Fire planning
- ✓ Southern Sierra Fire Management Officers - Wildland fire use
- ✓ Southern Sierra Fire Program Analysis system prototype - Draft fire management units

This increased use of the server has highlighted the need to address several issues. The first is the need to password protect draft and sensitive data. Users have also requested other functional enhancements which would allow more effective web based collaboration and data use. The additional data for these new map services has had a significant impact on available disc space. To meet these needs, SSGIC needs to fund continued USGS support of the web server. It is not clear how this will occur.

All agency ArcIMS managers now have Virtual Private Network (VPN) accounts at the USGS to allow remote connections to the server to begin creating map services for their respective agencies.

SSGIC Sponsored Training

At the previous meeting, it was concluded that use of the website by the local fire community is limited by lack of knowledge of both GIS and the website itself. SSGIC will provide both ArcGIS and website training. We will present a three day course adapted for the fire community and that includes website specific training. The intended audience will be local fire staff. It is not intended as GIS training for incident support. Training will be held at the Bakersfield BLM office. *An announcement and nomination forms will go out to the Fire Management Officers (FMO) to distribute to appropriate individuals in their agency.* Proposed dates are April 20 -22, 2004 or April 27 – 29, 2004.

Fire Program Analysis (FPA) system update

Diane Travis presented an update on the status of the Southern Sierra FPA prototype. This is a subset of the SSGIC analysis area limited to the federal agencies response area. The SSGIC is currently supporting data development for this federal budget application. Data developed for the FPA will be useful to the SSGIC.

Southern Sierra Fire Management Officers report

Brent Skaggs reported on a recent meeting of the Southern Sierra Fire Management Officers (SSFMO). They would like to contract with the SSGIC to provide 1) data storage and download capability for the five data layers required to run Farsite, 2) a map service of current wildland fire use fires, and 3) online viewing of live video from smoke monitoring cameras installed on the forests. The analysis area of the SSFMO's includes Yosemite National Park and the Sierra, Inyo, and Stanislaus National Forests in addition to the current SSGIC cooperators. *SSGIC will prepare several alternative proposals to support their goals, both short and long term, and Brent will present them at the next SSFMO meeting on March 17, 2004.*

Next Meeting

The next general meeting of the SSGIC is scheduled for May 5, 2004 in the conference room of the Sequoia National Forest Supervisors office in Porterville, CA.