

Overview of the GIS Professional Certification (GISP)

Matthew Mullenax, GISP

Berkeley County Planning Commission

Background:

- Professional certification topic of interest and debate in the GIS community for number of years.
- January 1, 2004 GIS Certification Institute (GISCI) created.
- GISCI provides GIS community with a complete certification program.

Terminology:

- **Certification:** A process, often voluntary, by which individuals who have demonstrated a level of expertise in the profession are identified to the public and other stakeholders by a third party. **Designed to recognize expertise.**
- **Licensure:** The granting of a license to practice a profession. Often regulated by states and indoctrinated in legislation. **Designed to guard against incompetence.** (*ie WV State Code §30-13A-10 Surveying license requirements*)
- **Accreditation:** The process of evaluating the academic qualifications or standards of an institution or program of study in accordance with pre-established criteria.
- **Certificate:** An award given to an individual recognizing completion of an academic or training program.

Why Certify?

- Although GIS has many uses, GISCI believes there is a GIS profession.
- GIS *professionals* understand and apply the *full range* of GIS capabilities, most commonly as their primary professional role.

Who Qualifies?

- Other professionals (surveyors, cartographers, landscape ecologists, planners, etc.) can be GIS professionals.
- GISCI does not look to restrict the use of GIS.
- GISCI looks to identify GIS professionals and separate them from casual users of the technology.

What can Certification Provide?

- 1) Professional recognition program for established GIS professionals.
- 2) Means of identification that can be used by colleagues, employers, the public, and other licensed or certified professionals.
- 3) Implementation of a professional code of ethics that identifies bad practice and upholds good practice.
- 4) Professional development yardstick through initial and recertification requirements.



No exam!

- Point-based, non-examination system.
- Centered on achievement in three categories:
 1. Educational achievement
 2. Professional experience
 3. Contributions to the profession

Minimum Category Points

Educational Achievement (EDU)	30 points
Professional Experience (EXP)	60 points
Contributions to the Profession (CON)	8 points
Additional (Flex) Points in any of the three Categories:	52 points
Total =	150 points

Flex points allows one to make up for a lack in one category with an excess in another (ie long on GIS experience, short on education)

The Educational Achievement Section (EDU)

- **Three EDU components:**
 1. Credential Points (degrees in any field)
 2. Course Points (geospatial technology courses & workshops)
 3. Conference Attendance Points (days spent at relevant meetings or conferences)

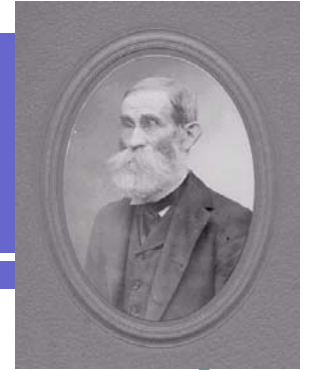
The Professional Experience Section (EXP)

- **Tier I: Analyst, System Design, Programming:** Typical tasks include database design or management, documentation or analysis of functional requirements, application design and evaluation, implementation management, and system administration. = **25 Points Per Year**
- **Tier II: Data Compilation, Data Maintenance, Teaching:** Typical tasks include editing data, map composition, report generation, database maintenance, data validation, instructional training, and teaching. = **15 Points Per Year**
- **Tier III: GIS User:** Typical tasks include utilization of applications involving geospatial technologies. Candidates may be involved in managing or coordinating GIS, but not involved in the technical implementation of GIS. = **10 Points Per Year**

4-year Minimum

- Applicants must have a combination of at least 4 years (48 months) of professional GIS experience to apply for GIS Certification.
- If the applicant has met the minimum requirement with less than 4 years of experience then the applicant must wait until 4 years of professional GIS experience is accrued.

The Grandfathering Provision



- Designed to assist professionals who have worked with spatial data for many years
- Successful candidates will only have their professional experience reviewed.
- Grandfathering applicants do not need to submit contribution or education points for initial certification.
- Grandfathering will only be available until December 31, 2008. There is no grandfathering provision for recertification. Recertification applicants will need to submit points in all three areas.

The Grandfathering Provision

You are eligible for Grandfathering if you have earned a minimum of 200 professional experience points (see forms EXP-1 and EXP-2). Candidates who qualify for grandfathering then, have worked for:

- **8 years** in a GIS position of **data analysis, system design, programming, or similar position.**

OR

- **13 1/3 years** in a GIS position of **data compilation, teaching, or similar position.**

OR

- **20 years** in a GIS User Position

OR

- **A combination** of the above positions that results in a total of **at least 200 points** as computed in forms EXP-1 and EXP-2.

The Contributions to the Profession Section (CON)

- **Eight categories of contribution points:**
 1. GIS Publications
 2. GIS Professional Association Involvement
 3. GIS Conference Participation
 4. GIS Workshop Instruction
 5. GIS Conference Presentation
 6. GIS Awards Received
 7. GIS Volunteer Efforts
 8. Other GIS Contributions

Additional Requirements:

- GISCI Code of Ethics & Rules of Conduct
- Certification Renewal
 - Every five years.
 - Minimum points in each category and total since initial certification.

Application Review Process:

- GISCI staff perform quantitative review to determine if points documented and added correctly.
- Qualitative review conducted by GISCI Review Board.
- Candidates notified 2-3 months of acceptance/rejection.
- Cost of GISCI certification is \$250.

www.gisci.org

The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying the GISCI website. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.gisci.org/>. The website header features the GISCI logo, the text "GIS Certification Institute", and navigation links for HOME, FEEDBACK, CONTENTS, and SEARCH. A contact number (TEL: 847-824-7768) and an EMAIL link are also present. A left-hand navigation menu lists categories such as Applicants, GISPs, Employers, Students / Practitioners, Ethics and Conduct, Newsroom, Organizations / Events, and About / Contact GISCI. The main content area prominently displays the GISCI logo and the text "Are you a GIS practitioner or a [GIS professional?](#)". Below this, a table provides information about application materials and the GISP definition.

REMINDER: The Grandfathering Provision expires January 1, 2009	
Application Materials	What is a GISP?
Applications for the GISCI Certification Program are now available. GISCI is now ready to accept completed applications accompanied by full payment and a signed code of ethics. View or download the application materials for GISCI professional	A GISP is a certified geographic information systems (GIS) Professional who has met the minimum standards for ethical conduct and professional practice as established by the GIS Certification Institute (GISCI)

Tips for filling out application:

- Focus on one section at a time.
- Send for transcripts early.
- Member of a professional GIS organization for < 6 months gains no points.
- Once you document 150 total points, no need to go further.

From personal experience...

- Took roughly eight hours to fill out application.
- Was notified eight weeks after application submission.
- GISCI very helpful when a question came up.
- Read Application Procedures Manual before digging through personal archives.
- Started filling out application a month before 4-year minimum achieved.
- No direct salary increase yet, but secured funding for GIS training in dire budgetary times.

GISP Points Example:



2008 West Virginia
GIS Conference

- Let's say you attend all three days of the conference.
- One day is spent entirely in workshops.
- You give one presentation.

“How many points is that worth?”

GISP Points Example:



2008 West Virginia
GIS Conference

- **Educational Achievement:**
 - Conference attendee
2 (# of conference days attended) x 0.1 point per day = 0.2 EDU points
 - Course points
8 (# student activity hours) ÷ 40 hrs per point = 0.2 EDU points
- **Contributions to the Profession:**
 - Conference presentations
1 (# of presentations) x 1 point per presentation = 1.0 CON points

WVAGP involvement can help you get points towards your GISP!

II. GIS-Related Professional Association Involvement (page 30)	
Level of Involvement:	Points Earned per Year of Office or Affiliation:
I. President or Board Chair	5
J. Board Membership	4
K. Committee Chairperson	3
L. Committee Member	2
M. Association/Organization Membership	1
III. GIS Conference Participation (page 31)	
Level of Involvement	Points Earned per Conference
N. Conference Chairperson	4
O. Conference Committee Member	2
IV. Workshop Instruction (page 31)	
	Points Earned per Workshop
P. Workshop Instruction	3
V. GIS Conference Presentations (page 31)	
Presentation Type	Points Earned per Event
Q. Conference Presentation	1
R. Conference Poster Display	1

Questions?

- Matthew Mullenax, GISP
GIS Coordinator
Berkeley County Planning Commission
400 West Stephen Street, Suite 203
Martinsburg, WV 25401
PH - (304) 267-5107
FX - (304) 262-3127
mmullenax@berkeleycountycomm.org