



October 2, 2007

RE: Invitation to Join WV Association of Geospatial Professionals

Dear Geospatial Professional,

I would like to invite you to join the WV Association of Geospatial Professionals (WVAGP), a volunteer, nonprofit association whose mission is to promote and share geographic information and mapping technologies in the Mountain State.

The formation of this organization was funded by the Fifty States Initiative, a nationwide program focused on developing effective GIS coordinating bodies and strategic plans for each of the fifty states. Importantly, this new association shall provide a mechanism for broad representation and inclusion in the decision-making of user communities. Through consensus building activities the association will inform executive decision-makers on geospatial issues and recommended policies.

In March 2007 the association became a permanent organization with the adoption of bylaws and the election of a board of directors. Elected directors include representatives from county, state, and federal government, education and research institutions, and the private sector.

Immediate objectives of the association include an annual geospatial conference and the adoption of a statewide strategic plan. Standing committees are an integral part of the association in accomplishing these objectives. The conference committee is planning the first annual conference scheduled for June 9-12 in Charleston, WV, while the technical issues and outreach committees are focused on planning and developing a State GIS Plan. In addition, topics relevant to strategic planning are scheduled during our membership meetings. For instance, at our June meeting the National Geodetic Survey and other state representatives presented strategies for improving the State's spatial reference layer. In September the membership discussed strategies for developing a coordinated imagery program and GIS enterprise architecture. Finally, at the request of its members, a special committee has formed to look at the relationships between professional surveyors and GIS professionals in West Virginia. Recommendations from this committee will be considered for approval by the membership.

Again, I would like to invite you to join with others and share your voice in this growing geospatial organization.

Sincerely,

Kurt Donaldson
President, WVAGP
<http://www.wvagp.org>

WVAGP HISTORY

In November 2005 at the Embassy Suites in Charleston, WV, approximately 90 GIS professionals met at a statewide GIS coordination meeting to discuss a new West Virginia GIS Coordinating Council. Participants provided feedback about a new coordinating structure whose broader representation would include the private sector, academia, and all levels of government. The geospatial community then appointed a GIS Coordination Committee to further explore implementing a new coordinating body and strategic plan for the State.

The GIS Coordination Committee, which included geospatial professionals from the government, academia, and private sector, convened six times to set up the framework for a new coordination program. During the WV GIS Conference in May 2006, elements of the proposed coordination program were presented to the statewide geospatial community. A majority of geospatial professionals who participated in this forum agreed that a permanent organization for geospatial professionals should be formed, although additional consensus-building efforts were needed regarding the bylaws which govern the association.

In August 2006, the West Virginia GIS Coordination Committee completed a business plan which recommended that a volunteer, nonprofit geospatial coordinating body, named the WV Association of Geospatial Professionals (WVAGP), be formed. It was recommended that the new coordinating body provide a mechanism for broad representation and inclusion, including federal, state, county, and municipal governments; private sector GIS users and vendors; academic sector; nonprofit organizations; utilities; and the general public. In addition, it was recommended that through strategic planning and consensus building activities the association would inform executive decision-makers on geospatial issues and recommended policies.

On 13 September 2006, the first organizational meeting of the association was held in Charleston, WV, in which members of the geospatial community approved a resolution to form a permanent organization. During this mass meeting the assembly also elected temporary officers and appointed a committee to draft bylaws. All interested members who attended the first organizational meeting were invited to participate in the bylaws committee to draft the proposed bylaws. Twenty-two individuals from federal, state, and local government, education and research, and the private sector volunteered to serve on the bylaws committee. Parliamentary procedures set forth in *Robert's Rules of Order* and other resources were utilized to create the association's bylaws, including the hiring of a professional registered parliamentarian. The full committee convened three times between October 2006 and February 2007 to draft the bylaws. During this time period, the committee diligently deliberated on drafting the governance rules, all the while ensuring that the proposed bylaws were democratic and that the members had the ultimate say in the new association.

On 21 February 2007, the articles of incorporation were registered with the Office of the Secretary of State, and on 15 March 2007, the association became a permanent organization with the adoption of the bylaws and the election of a board of directors. Importantly, the initial composition of the charter members and elected directors reflected a broad representation and inclusion in the decision-making of user communities. In August 2007, five months after the charter membership meeting, the Internal Revenue Service approved WVAGP as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charity whereby contributions to the association are tax exempt.

The formation of this organization was funded by the Fifty States Initiative, a nationwide program focused on developing effective GIS coordinating bodies and strategic plans for each of the fifty states. In support of this initiative, the state of West Virginia received a competitive 2006 federal grant from the Federal Geographic Data Committee's Cooperative Agreements Program (CAP). Between March 2006 and September 2007, this funding was utilized to pay for meeting expenses, professional services, and other start-up expenses of the new coordinating body.