

**Western Governors' Association  
Policy Resolution 09-8**

***Collaborative Geographic Data Is Part of the Nation's Critical Infrastructure***

**A. BACKGROUND**

1. The critical issues facing Western States are economic downturn, renewable energy zones/energy reform, wildland fire protection, and water delivery. Western Governors rely on timely, accurate and multilayered geographic data when developing agendas for these policy areas. Geographic data and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology have become indispensable tools for Western Governors in these and other areas. Geographic data includes map-based information about transportation, elevation, hydrology, boundaries, parcels, land use and imagery, among other things. Western Governors use these tools to improve services to citizens and to analyze, develop, and solve important public policy issues. While the technology tools are critical, investment in coordinated data still needs work.
2. A vital component of government GIS is land records and parcel (cadastral) data. The Bureau of Land Management is working with state and local governments to develop accurate, current and standardized digital representations of the Public Land Survey System and parcel data to meet identified business needs such as forest health and wildland fire management, energy, and economic development. The result of this collaboration is called the Cadastral National Spatial Data Infrastructure (Cadastral NSDI). The Cadastral NSDI is critical for western states where land ownership is a patchwork of federal, state, tribal and private land parcels often with separated mineral ownership. The common framework of land ownership is essential to support many decisions and business processes in the west.
3. High resolution and current aerial and satellite imagery has become an essential commodity. Currently, imagery is being acquired by hundreds of different entities across the Nation. This leads to higher costs, varying quality and vintage, duplication of efforts and a patchwork of inconsistent and non-sharable products. Coordinating acquisition for large areas will lower the cost of imagery to the taxpayer and improve the availability of standardized, high-quality imagery products.
4. The National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC), in cooperation with the Federal Geographic Data Committee, have developed the *Fifty States Initiative* which outlines a fundamental change in the way governments should work together to build a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). It identifies the criteria which promote effective statewide GIS coordination activities and identifies characteristics of successful states, which can be used to establish statewide coordination councils that will take an active roll in completing a NSDI. Common standards and framework of data across state boundaries will facilitate solutions to the problems that are common to all.

5. Coordination efforts among all sectors of government for data collection and maintenance needs to be dramatically improved. Otherwise, organizations will continue creating the same geographic data over the same areas resulting in duplicate and sometimes conflicting data. There is potential for tremendous dollar savings as well as better decisions if accurate data is developed and shared through a coordinated approach.
6. The combination of investment in standardized data and coordinated approaches to managing data will make Western Governors leaders in understanding the choices when faced with the policy decisions at hand. Significant trade-offs exist when siting new energy collection and distribution centers, strategizing economic growth investment, assessing fire hazard severity, and determining water usage. GIS is the medium providing Western Governors' with the ability to help understand and communicate these trade-offs and make the most informed decision.
7. Western states are poised to be leaders in the U.S. efforts for energy independence through advanced renewable energy resource investment. Hydroelectric, solar, wind and geothermal resources exist throughout the Western states more than their eastern cousins. Geospatial data that depicts and characterizes these resources will be important to the prioritization and implementation of renewable energy development efforts. In addition, Western states can, through creating consistent coordinated geographic data, be leaders in identifying how, why, when and where Smart Grid investments are working. In addition, geographic data and services will be integral inputs to the efforts to optimize grid performance and target and manage conservation initiatives. Only through detailed maps and on-line data services of the land base and ownership can energy use, reduction and independence from foreign resources be measured and effectively monitored.

**B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT**

1. Western States face unique challenges requiring leadership in both policy and technology. Becoming leaders in geographic data, technology, services, and analysis will help Western Governors implement effective policies for economic development, energy, wildland fire and water.
2. Western Governors encourage regional, state, and interstate geographic data sharing. To this end, Western Governors urge BLM to complete, enhance, and maintain the Cadastral NSDI in coordination and partnership with state, tribal and local governments. Western Governors call on Congress to provide the necessary funding, including stimulus dollars, for BLM to undertake this important effort. Western Governors call on Congress to authorize the expenditure of already appropriated funding to create and maintain local, state and tribal implementation of the Cadastral NSDI in support of energy development, forest health restoration, wildland fire management, Homeland Security and First Responders.
3. Western Governors support large area data acquisition practices, as identified in NSGIC's *Imagery for the Nation*, which will keep the cost to the taxpayer as low as possible and improve the availability of standardized, high-quality imagery products. *Imagery For*

*The Nation* is an important initiative that can meet the Nation's needs, as well as the unique needs of Western States. Western Governors urge Congress to coordinate appropriations of existing federal imagery acquisition programs to fully fund the coordinated approach described in *Imagery For The Nation*.

4. Western Governors support federal, state, tribal and local coordination of GIS activities at the state level through state coordination councils. Western Governors applaud the results-oriented approach to building a National Spatial Data Infrastructure as outlined in the *Fifty States Initiative*.
5. Western Governors support federal GIS initiatives including the National Geospatial Advisory Committee's strategic recommendations for the National Spatial Data Infrastructure and the development of the U. S. Office of Management and Budget's Geospatial Line of Business activity. These national efforts must include representation from state, local, and tribal governments.
6. Western Governors believe an intergovernmental approach to development and governance of geographic activities is necessary to optimize investments and results. An intergovernmental governance approach for the NSDI ensures vital national interests as well as state and local government's business needs are served. As such, Western States will strive for leadership in implementing transparency and accountability in government by using GIS technology for public access to data.

**C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE**

1. Western Governors direct the Western Governors Geographic Information Council continue to support Western Governors' Association on geographic data and technology issues.
2. The Western Governors' Association (WGA) shall post this resolution to its Web site to be referred to and transmitted as necessary.