

almost certain continued budgetary cutbacks, speakers from OMB and GAO emphasized how essential it is and will continue to be to wisely plan for large procurements and prudently show a positive benefit-to-cost ratio for GIS-related expenses. Additionally, a wide range of speakers urged the rapid implementation of spatial data standards and promoted increased coordination and cooperation among federal/state agencies to ensure that the most economic use of the technology is taken. GIS technology in general, as perceived by GISDEX speakers, is universally recognized as a valid tool for deriving more meaningful information from the vast pool of national data the federal government must manage. The following comments were reported by federal conference attendees.

Attendees liked the statement that there's a need to tie GIS (and ADP in general) to a new way of doing business and not just automating the way we do business now. Speakers Ralph Carlone, assistant comptroller general of the General Accounting Office, and futurist Walter Doherty, as well as others, stressed the importance of organizational change to incorporate technological advances. Doherty's commentary indicated there is

usually a 40-year lag between technological innovation and effective incorporation of that technology into the social milieu. The audience also showed agreement with Frank Branket's, deputy secretary, Deputy of the Interior, statement that GIS is recognized as a means to facilitate dialogue. David Cowen, among other speakers, brought out that a positive feature of GIS is that it enables different perspectives of the same problem to be visualized and can be used as a tool for negotiating solutions to complex problems. Attendees also generally agreed that cooperation between different branches of federal government with the vendor and service-sector community was a valuable asset in hosting this event.

There were a number of things people interviewed would have liked to see. Those included: 1.) more audience interaction; 2.) more state government involvement; 3.) a regularly scheduled conference forum they can count on for repeatedly addressing those problems that arise concerning the federal government and GIS; and 4.) a proceedings of presentations or guidebook of names, addresses, and sources of related standards and regulations (sort of a GIS sourcebook dedicated to GIS governmental concerns).

There also were a number of items picked up in informal discussions that the federal GIS community still worries about. The primary concern is that things may not be as rosy as portrayed at GISDEX. A certain sense of skepticism prevailed — most attendees recognized that only the voices of GIS supporters were heard: those opposed or indifferent to the field would not have attended the event. Also, many observed that the issues brought out at GISDEX are, in fact, not new — interagency cooperation, standards and such have been identified as critical issues for the better part of the last decade. Also, there is great concern that the current budgetary climate may stifle innovation in GIS applications and growth in the federal market sector. That comment was voiced both by federal practitioners and the contractors who depend on federal programs for their lifeblood. Some believe the technology may be oversold as a panacea to all our information dilemmas. The concern was expressed that when the realization occurs that GIS is not a cure-all for those dilemmas, a resulting reactionary movement may impact federal GIS activities. Despite these concerns, most attendees want to believe that the field is maturing and the impetus for change is finally reaching critical mass. Time will tell. ☺

## Technology at Work in the National Forest



The Virginia Wilderness Act (Public Law #98-586), passed by Congress Oct. 30, 1984, was designed to preserve the wilderness characteristics of various

areas within the national forest. Wilderness area use is restricted by law. For example, roads, motorized vehicles or timber harvesting are not permitted.

The U.S. Forest Service recently contracted Anderson and Associates, Inc., Blacksburg, Va., to mark parts of the Peter's Mountain and Mountain Lake wilderness areas covering more than 14,000 acres. GPS was used to establish the master control network, eliminating the need for cutting and brushing lines and leaving the landscape virtually undisturbed.

The satellite visibility windows are usually available from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and again from around 12:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. The survey team used three Ashtech receivers on the project. Satellite data was collected, downloaded and processed during both observation windows. By using this satellite surveying technology, a control network of approximately 33 miles in length was established over some of the most rugged terrain in the area. The task took less than four days — a remarkable achievement compared to the days of steel-tape surveying. Other conventional methods would have taken 20 days or more to complete.

With the baseline completed, the survey crew now is in the process of marking boundaries of Mountain Lake and the Peter's Mountain wilderness areas. These areas located in the Blacksburg Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest spread from Craig and Giles Counties in Virginia to Monroe County, W. Va., and contain several miles of the Appalachian trail that winds through the valleys and across the ridges.

GPS has given the U.S. Forest Service a better capability to complete the project and other surveying projects in a more timely and cost-effective manner. These surveys reduce the number of man-days needed to complete projects. GPS is an all-weather system that allows survey work to proceed in otherwise restricting weather conditions, providing better estimates in the planning process. ☺

Submitted by Karin Clark, marketing coordinator, Anderson and Associates, Inc.

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