

**NEW HAMPSHIRE GIS CONSERVATION COLLABORATIVE
SPRING MEETING – MAY 8, 2003
CONCORD, NH**

Draft Meeting Notes – July 31, 2003

The New Hampshire GIS Conservation Collaborative convened on May 8, 2003 for its biennial meeting. NHGCC coordinator, Ann Fowler Wallace, welcomed participants and reviewed the agenda for the day.

Update on State Government Climate: New Administration, Agency Restructuring, Fiscal Uncertainties

Ken Gallagher provided an update on the current climate within state government and potential agency restructuring that could take place at the direction of the new Administration. There are many unknowns at the Office for State Planning and the potential for wholesale change is great. It appears that there will be some restructuring of the state's IT capabilities. At the moment, funding for GRANIT has not been cut from the OSP budget, but it has not increased either. Much will depend upon changes that will be proposed as part of the Governor's FY04 budget and on the Legislature's response to that budget.

Sarah Thorne provided another perspective on the current legislative session and activities at the state government level. The major public policy focus of the conservation community has been the Land and Community Heritage Program (LCHIP), which is in a very tough spot right now. The Senate Finance Committee has tried to zero out the program, and the community is hoping for a compromise to secure funding of \$4MM/year. The conservation community had been advocating for \$6MM/year. The climate in the legislative session is as negative as she has seen for a long time. Conservationists are defending existing key programs, which makes new initiatives all the more difficult. She provided a brief update on H649, the Master Planning and GRANIT Legislation introduced by Rep. Priscilla Lockwood. Sarah added that given the very difficult climate at the state level, the Forest Society feels the conservation community's best hope is in the municipalities. The action is really at the local level. Sarah hopes that NHGCC's Work Plan recognizes this and can tap into the tremendous need and support for conservation at the local level. She encouraged the group to do all that it can to educate municipal officials about the value of GST's and to build a local constituency for GIS tools and resources among local planners, boards, etc.

Wildlife Data Project

Darrel Covell gave a presentation on the status of the wildlife data project and the NH Wildlife Sightings Web Site that is focused on rare wildlife species and significant wildlife habitat. The project was a partnership of several agencies including Fish & Game, Audubon Society of NH, Cooperative Extension, Complex Systems Research

Center/GRANIT, with funding from the Pardoe Foundation and in-kind support from the state agencies.

Review of NHGCC Work Plan

Comments/Decisions re Work Plan:

- Prepare an Executive Summary to the Work Plan document; make outputs and outcomes more explicit (things that will happen if the Work Plan is implemented both those we can quantify and end results expected).
- Goal 1 (Data and Infrastructure Development) – Action Plan Item A (Creation of NH GIS Coordinator): This is absolutely central to success of Work Plan. More important to think about the functions, rather than the position. Fay cannot do this work because her funding is restricted to other things. Is a fall back to secure adequate and increasing support for GRANIT to take on more of the coordinating work? At the time this was drafted there was no DITM.
- Goal 1 – Action Plan Item B (Expansion of Organizational Capacity at GRANIT): This is a long-term goal. Private sector funding in the \$10,000 - \$20,000 range could help make the case for this need and help market to decision makers. NHGCC can take this a next step.
- Goal 1 – Action Plan Item C (Expand Organization Capacity at Municipal and Regional Levels): Of the list of priority needs, several seem appropriate for private funder support: the GIS training for municipalities both for those that have in-house GIS capability and those municipalities that do not, and further development of the Conservation Lands Viewer to provide additional maps and resources to municipalities. On the public sector side, GRANIT has submitted a proposal to secure funding for GIS support to impacted municipalities in the I-93 corridor, using I-93 DOT mitigation funds.
- Goal 1 – Action Plan Item D (GRANIT Data Layer Development): New Hampshire's I-Team will determine data layer priorities, cost estimates, and approach for how NH will address needs re 8-10 data sets, including roads, surface waters, boundaries, parcels, etc. The two data sets in the NHGCC plan not being looked at by the I-Team are Zoning and Plant and Wildlife Habitats and Occurrence Data.
- Re: the Plant and Wildlife Habitats Data Layer: NH Fish & Game will be creating a number of data models as part of the preparation of its Comprehensive Wildlife Plan. The agency is currently developing a plan for incorporating a number of factors including known locations, habitat models, and an analysis of threats. A Development Trends Data Layer would be helpful and Fish & Game might provide the funding to do this. There is a good chance the NHF&G can support the costs associated with development of this data layer now and into the

future. The group also discussed the idea of developing a process for allowing land trusts and other approved persons to submit data sets on line. Fay did not think this would be workable currently as GRANIT lacks the staff to provide the quality assurance.

- **Goal 1 – Action Plan Item E (Internet-based Technology Access):** This item calls for 4 new GRANIT staff, in addition to the three new positions identified in Action Plan Item B (expansion of organizational capacity at GRANIT). Think that Fay indicated she could do some follow-up with other state agencies concerning these needs.

Going Public with NHGCC Work Plan and Priorities

- **Time for NHGCC to “come out.”** Meeting participants agreed that it is time for NHGCC to go public with its Strategy and Priorities. We talked about the need to produce a set of information materials on GIS touching on the values/importance of GIS, providing case examples and stories of how good planning saves money (cite Cost of Community Services data), and some cost/benefit analysis. A number of sources were cited for these examples including ESRI’s Book on GIS and local government, and ESRI’s Return on Investment Matrices, and Kevin Flanders video project providing interviews on local benefits of GIS. In the short term, the group agreed that we could post our Work Plan on the GRANIT web site.
- **Proposed Outreach Strategy.** The group had an extensive discussion about a recommended NHGCC outreach strategy. Three principal strategies were suggested: a municipal strategy, a state decision maker strategy, and a bottom up educational strategy targeting many parties and sectors including agency division heads. Any outreach strategy targeting the Governor’s Office and Administration should be carefully coordinated with staff from GRANIT and OSP, who are hoping set up a meeting with the Governor’s technology point person, Bob Anderson, to brief him on GRANIT and the State GIS Strategic Plan. In her presentation on changes at the state level, Sarah Thorne strongly suggested that the group focus on educating local officials and building local constituencies to support GIS over the long term.
- **Key persons.** The group identified several key persons who might help make the case for GIS support at the state level or provide strategic guidance. The group suggested setting up some preliminary meetings with the following people to brief them on the importance and priority needs for GIS and enlist their advice and assistance for how best to take that message forward. Those persons include, Ray Burton who sits on the Governor’s Council, Lew Feldstein, President of NH Charitable Foundation, and a handful of state legislators who have been supportive of conservation and master planning including King, Beelow, Burling, Lockwood & Hager. Don Cooke felt that Ray Burton might be able to help NHGCC get the attention of senior management at the Bureau of Emergency

Communications (the 911 people), who could provide critical support for GIS activities in the state if so inclined. Ray Burton could also be helpful in thinking through the best way to approach the Governor's office and his key advisors.

- **Targets for Outreach:** Participants identified a long list of organizations and sectors that should be targeted as part of NHGCC's outreach strategy. The list includes:
 - Municipalities: approach through RPAs, NH Municipal Association, other association meetings: planners, tax collectors, conservation commissions
 - Governor's Office/Administration
 - Governor's Council
 - State Agency Heads: DOT, BEC, CORD agencies
 - Business Community: chambers and business associations
 - Educators
 - Conservation Community: land trusts, conservation commissions, watershed groups

- **Our message:** NHGCC needs to craft a clear message to take to decision makers. The message should note the importance of GIS as a vehicle for promoting efficiency and maximizing resources, for better information and decision-making, and as a short term investment that will reap major cost savings over time. Our message should emphasize both the value of GIS and the value of central coordination at GRANIT. It should reference studies such as Phil Auger's Cost of Community Services studies, which demonstrate that good land use planning and open space conservation save money for communities, and other cost/benefit analyses that make a strong case for GIS. This message will need to be tailored to the various audiences. (For municipalities: GIS is a high priority and essential tool for supporting better decision making at the local level.) It was suggested that our message make GIS, the tool, the "star". NHGCC would seek consulting assistance to develop outreach and communications materials.

- **The Messenger:** The group did not make a decision about which organizations or individual/s should be the NHGCC messenger. As noted above, we identified several key persons that could provide advice, guidance, and access. We also discussed the idea of hiring a well-connected consultant to help us implement the outreach and advocacy strategy.

New Hampshire Forum on Economy, Environment & Community

Over lunch, the group heard a presentation by Meredith Hatfield on the development of the New Hampshire Forum on Economy, Environment & Community, formerly known as Livable New Hampshire. Over the next year, the Forum will be hosting a series of informational sessions on a range of topics related to smart growth and livable communities issues. Meredith expects that one session will focus on tools and resources – including GIS and geospatial technologies.

Next Steps

Ann will make additional edits to the Work Plan to reflect suggestions and comments made during today's discussion. We will convene a conference call with Ann, Bruce, Fay, and Don Cooke to further discuss thinking about the NHGCC outreach strategy.