

Surveying, Photogrammetry & GIS Professionals Where do we go from here?

Meeting Notes

This document contains notes from the first meeting of surveyors, photogrammetrists, and GIS professionals to examine overlaps in our professions.

Introduction

During the 2001 legislative session the Professional Land Surveyors of Oregon (PLSO) introduced legislation that would have modified the current statute as to what constitutes the practice of surveying. The legislation did not pass. However, it did raise the issue that surveyors, photogrammetrists, and GIS professionals need to work together to further define their roles in measuring, displaying, using, and managing land information. To begin to address these issues, the Oregon GIS Association had a work session as part of their Summer 2001 meeting. At that meeting the professionals present elected to embark on a process to address this issue. Those present decided that representatives from various impacted professional organizations should attend, including OGIC, OGISA, URISA, AOC, OACES, PLSO, OSBEELS, and ORMAP. This document summarizes the discussion from the first meeting. The meeting was attended by:

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Concerns, Issues and Perspectives from the Community

The following notes were recorded from a round table discussion where each attending professional identified important issues, concerns and perspectives on the issues being discussed. The individuals in general were responding to the question: "What is the problem and what are your concerns?" The information was captured chronologically and no attempt was made to organize it by profession or priority. The information identified is not a definitive statement nor should it be viewed as the official position taken by a professional. It is only information provided to give us a better perspective on the issue.

GIS

1. I did not think we had a problem.
2. Concerned about how political activities of surveyors adversely impact GIS profession.
3. Not clear on what the practice of surveying is.

Private Surveyor

1. There appears to be areas where GIS professionals are practicing surveying.
2. It appears that GIS professionals have a lack of understanding of coordinate systems and misuse them.
3. Having a GPS unit does not give you the ability to do what a surveyor does.
4. If GIS people are only "processing" information and not going in the field, then surveyors should not have a problem. However, when positional information is collected in the field, a surveyor should supervise the action.

OSBEELS Member

1. There is a great need for standards of care and protection of the public.
2. Land surveying has been around for a considerable amount of time as a profession. Newer technology provides for other ways of doing things.

Photogrammetry/GIS

1. It appears that many surveyors do not understand what GIS people do.
2. Concerned about adverse effects on profession.

Surveyor/GIS

1. GPS technology has created tools that make “accurate” measurements in the field possible.
2. These new tools allow almost anyone to maintain location information.
3. This is a wider issue than GIS, Surveying, and Photogrammetry and affects various scientific fields, realtors, etc.
4. The GIS and Surveying professions both need to come clean and really identify what the issues are.

Engineer

- 1) Concerned about impacts of any political action on multiple department heads.
- 2) It is not just measurements but also about interpretation of measurements.

ASPRS/Private Photogrammetrist

1. It is unclear whether or not photogrammetry requires the supervision of a surveyor. Some firms conduct activities under the supervision of a surveyor or engineer while others do not.
2. If photogrammetrists need to be registered, there needs to be a “grandfathering” clause that allows established professionals to continue existing activities.

GIS/ Private Consultant

1. Currently use GPS equipment to collect field information. Need a good definition of what surveying is (a professional boundary).
2. Concerned about how a wide range of data collection efforts using GPS could be impacted by any actions taken.

A&T

1. Not sure what the real issues are. Cartographers are not doing anything differently than they have always done. Now their maps are more accessible. But maps have always been created with good practices.
2. Just because you use COGO tools to define a boundary it does not mean you are practicing surveying.

County Surveyor

1. The group needs to define what the “harm to the public” is when GPS technology has been used by a non-surveyor to locate a field position.

2. Concerned about how cartographers will fit within this equation.
3. Any legislation must be well thought out.

Private Surveyor

1. Current law is too broad. Too many different spins on what could be the practice of surveying.
2. There is a license issue (responsibility) that GIS professionals should embrace to “protect the public”.
3. Tools should not define the profession.
4. Need to focus on what actions constitute surveying.

County Surveyor

1. There appears to be a bad perception by GIS professionals that surveyors do not know about GIS. Many surveyors do know about GIS.
2. Many locational features that are often shown on maps should not be.
3. Use of location information as taken from GPS by the public could cause harm.
4. There appears to be no method in the GIS profession for pursuing individuals who practice badly, as there is in the survey profession.

PLSO Surveyor

1. Survey law is very definite. If you identify topography on a map it is surveying.
2. Equipment and products are not the issue. The practice, procedures and interpretation are.
3. Must keep in mind how the public is impacted.
- 4.

GIS

1. Most GIS professionals are usually just converting and integrating information that is already there.
2. Licensing of the profession is a concern.
3. The wider GIS community is looking at certification of professionals.

Other Comments and Common Concerns

1. When you go out and measure on the ground, then surveyors get concerned.
2. Remember it is not the tool but the use of the tool.
3. When geographic information is presented and/or used by the public, the information should be “reliable”, and developed professionally.

Possible Solutions & Issues Regarding the Solution

Following the discussion on what the problem is, the group identified possible solutions. Again the information was captured chronologically.

1. GIS activities should be licensed.
2. We need to license photogrammetrists.
3. We need to develop a system where there is accountability for activities.
4. We need an avenue to resolve problems.
5. Licensing will address liability.
6. Cadastral mappers need to be licensed.
7. Any solution must be statewide and developed locally within the state.
8. Licensing will set a standard for process.
9. We need to develop a mandatory disclaimer on data and products.
10. Whatever is done should be backed up by law.
11. We need to educate each other on what the practice of GIS, surveying and photogrammetry are.
12. Whatever we do, the focus must be the protection of the public.
13. Self-policing will not work.
14. When defining practices we need good examples that illustrate the issues.
15. Data should be certified.
16. Need to improve communication between the various professions.
17. Should review national efforts on modifications of model law.
18. Any development should involve the AGs office at some point. One way to use them is to propose something and ask for a review.
19. We need to educate the public on proper use of geographic information.
20. GIS certification is actively being examined by the international community.
21. We need enforcement.
22. We should not constrain ourselves to finding a solution before the next legislative session.
23. The solution needs to be "common solution" endorsed by all participating organizations.

What is Next

The following steps were selected as the most reasonable plan of action.

1. A subcommittee will craft a statement that conceptually identifies what the group wants. The statement will address the concerns by all participating organizations.
2. The group will review this in a couple of months.
3. Modifications will be made as needed.
4. The group will then review model law and the current law to see how it fits. This will define where we need to go next.