

# **TECHNICAL REPORT**

## **5 TH GLOBAL SPACIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE CONFERENCE**

**“THEME: GSDI FOR IMPROVED DECISION MAKING”**

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### **COMITÉ PERMANENTE PARA LA INFRASTRUCTURA DE DATOS ESPACIALES DE LAS AMÉRICAS (CP-IDEA)**

**CARTAGENA DE INDIAS, COLOMBIA MAY 18 – 25, 2001**

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#### **PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR SPACIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE AMERICAS (PC-IDEA):**

Belize attended the GSDI conference at the invitation of the Central American Geographic Information Project (PROCIG). PROCIG is a regional project that was implemented to help establish national special data structures in Central American country. According to the coordinator the donors originally limited the involvement in this project to the spanish-speaking countries. Since that time they have come under heavy criticism for excluding Belize. The project funds ends this year and the PROCIG representatives wanted to meet to discuss future funding for geospacial data development in the region and felt that Belize should be included. The meeting was held parallel to the 5 th Global Spacial Data Infrastructure (GSDI) conference.

PC-IDEA was established on 29 February 2000. Prior to the Cartagena meeting the committee had 21 member nations from north, central and south america. Belize and Guyana were officially inducted at this meeting. Other permanent committees (regional) are for Asia and the Pacific (PC-GIAP), Africa (PC-AFRICA) and EuroGraphics.



**SOME PC-IDEA DELEGATES**

**L-R: Mabel Alvarez-Argentina; Dr. Noe Pineda-Honduras, Fernando Boiton-Guatemala, Alain Cozzi (PAIGH-France)  
Denis Fuentes-Panama, Noreen Fairweather-Belize**

Among the resolutions PC-IDEA made at the Cartagena conference was the establishment of a working group to promote the standardization of geographic names. The stated main objective is to “support and strengthen the initiatives by the United Nations experts, the Pan-american Institute for Geography and History (PAIGH) and for the normalization, precise and consistent use of

geographic names, as essential elements in the global, regional and national special data infrastructure, needed for communication and the processing of sustainable socioeconomic development of the region". The Agustin Codazzi Geographic Institute (IGAC) of Colombia has volunteered and was supported to take the lead role in this initiative. PC-IDEA also made its first declaration in Colombia, which basically sets out some of our commitments and intentions.

The director of IGAC and now the new chair of GDSI is Santiago Borrero. Santiago has obviously done yeomans work in Colombia and the region in this area. IGAC also hosted the GDSI conference, provided logistics and public relation experts to help facilitate the over 40 countries represented at the meeting. A job for which they are to be commended.

### **GLOBAL SPACIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE (GDSI):**

Global Spacial Data Infrastructure (GDSI) is an international initiative that facilitates the development of geospatial data among countries. The use of geospatial data is growing tremendously as governments and other institutions are beginning to see its application not only as a Geographic Information System (GIS), but also as a tool to support a wide range of other activities. As the awareness grows the need to establish a National Spacial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) has become a necessity.

All the countries in Central America (excluding Belize) have already started the development of their NSDI's. Support for this came from SICA, IADB, PAIGH, EROS Data Centre and International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). The NSDI in each country centered on development in four key areas (a) institutional framework (b) primary data sources (c) technical standards and protocols and (d) clearinghouse network..

Part of the intention of PC-IDEA is to bring together government representatives from Central America, along with experts to move forward the NSDI concept. This includes environmental protection, data compatibility, special data policies, data documentation (metadata), modernization of the state and access to information (clearinghouse). The NSDI concept mandates the national geospatial agency to take the leadership role to establish and work towards the goals of the NSDI. In the case of Belize, the Land Information Centre. The GSDI resolutions made in Cartagena (of which there are 12), range from defining the GDSI, legal and regulatory matters, and relationships with other initiatives through to sustainable development.

### **WHAT MEMBERSHIP MEANS FOR BELIZE (NEXT STEPS):**

In addition to the activities and benefits mention above, Belize is expected within the next six weeks, (we may have to extend this time due to the many national conferences already scheduled) to call a meeting a representatives of organizations involved with spacial data development and processing in the country, in an effort to form a national committee. As a country after this initial meeting we can begin to take the necessary steps to establish a geospatial data infrastructure. To date the Land Information Centre has set the "standards" for GIS work, and we are to be commended for our efforts, particularly when it comes to the quality and accuracy of our datasets. So, even though we are behind in setting up a "formal structure" we are still very much up to speed as any of the other countries in the americas. The procedures and data agreements that I have put in place are along the same lines that these countries are now implemented formally.

Through our membership we would be able to request (through project proposals) funds to establish our NSDI and develop needed datasets. Two such opportunities exists under the Global Map Grant Program. Jack Dangermond (owner/CEO of ESRI) announced in Cartagena, the launch of the International Spatial Data Infrastructure/Global Map Grant Program in memory of the late Professor John Estes, Chairperson of the International Steering Committee for Global Mapping (ISCGM). US \$5 million is being made available and Belize will be submitting a proposal under this program. The ISCGM will be setting up a small committee to vet and approve proposals and generally to oversee the grant program.

Also, UCLA under the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is also at this time offering small grants to Central America for research. Among the scope offered are population and the environment and related topics. Application deadline for this fund is September 15, 2001. The maximum award will be US\$10,000. The Information has been forwarded to the Department of the Environment and the Central Statistics Office for their interest.

We have committed ourselves to participating in the development of a regional proposal for the NSDI and is also interested in working on an accessibility to protected areas study in collaboration with the Biodiversity Office/FD.

#### **CONTACTS MADE:**

Merryll Lyew, regional representative of ESRI , he also introduced me to Mr. Dangermond. The LIC has been communicating since 1992 with Mr. Lyew to buy ESRI products (ARCINFO and ARCVIEW) and get technical assistance. He has been very supportive of our development efforts in geospatial data. It was my pleasure to finally meet him in person.

Alain Cozzi and Carlos Yañez of PAIGH France and Mexico respectively. Carlos Yañez expressed his concern about Belize's inactive membership in PAIGH for almost all the commissioned areas. He also mentioned that I should have received a training opportunity, for my commission area, from PAIGH in February. Since being recently named the representative for Belize in the cartographic area, I have began participating in the development of the CORINE Land Cover Project. Mr. Cozzi has been very instrumental in trying to move forward this project. The representatives (PAIGH) from central america met with him for about two hours during which he briefed us on the status of the proposal submission. It appears that we will be getting a response by August this year.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, my comment is for Belize to stay focus and do what is in the best interest of Belize first and foremost. In our activities, and taking the lead at a national level, we must ensure that we generate data that Belize needs in addition to our participation at a regional level. We need to avoid the scenario where we find ourselves updating a dataset 2 – 3 years down the road that had never been optimized as it should have.

On our national committee, we need experienced persons who can make decisions on behalf of their organizations. Persons who understand that decisions we make must be in accordance with national policies and directions and not necessarily those that will be in the best interest of our individual organizations. I am also convinced that in order for us to succeed with establishing an NSDI, there must be support at the political level. These are the people with decide national budgets and priorities, and I am convinced that we must make every effort to sensitize this group on the needs and use of geospatial data for policy and decision making.

Overall the conference was most beneficial, thee presentations had excellent content and were well delivered. Through PROCIG, Belize continues to build excellent relations with our central american colleagues and now through PC-IDEA, we can extend this collaboration to north and south america. I believe we can learn a lot from the advances and experiences of the countries that have preceded us in the development of an NSDI.

Finally, I hope the level of commitment that is necessary it is appreciated and that “we are ever cognizant of the inherent benefits of when we generate data once, we can use it for many applications”.