

Federal Geographic Data Committee Launches New Geospatial Website

State-of-the-art platform has tools for the public to create maps, share information

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The federal government and its geospatial partners today unveiled www.geoplatform.gov, a prototype Geospatial Platform website providing an initial view of the future of user-friendly, integrated, federal data collections on common geographic maps.

This prototype version of the Geospatial Platform combines map-based data and tools with the latest internet technologies to **deliver geospatial information in a simple, understandable package**. Users—including the public, federal agencies and their partners—can easily find federally-maintained geospatial data, services and applications, as well as access data from our partners across State, Tribal, Regional and local governments.

"The Geospatial Platform will provide a user-friendly 'one-stop shop' for place-based data you can trust, and the tools to display that data on a map platform," said Anne Castle, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science.

Through the website, users can create their own maps by combining their data with public domain data and can collaborate in public and private groups with others who share their interests. Maps assembled through the Geospatial Platform can be shared with others through web browsers and mobile technologies. All of this is possible without requiring users to install software on their own computers.

The Geospatial Platform has been developed as a partnership among the member agencies of the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), an interagency committee composed of representatives from the Executive Office of the President, and Cabinet level and independent Federal agencies including Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The FGDC promotes the coordinated development, use, sharing, and dissemination of geospatial data on a national basis. Assistant Secretary Castle serves as chair of the FGDC steering committee. The Geospatial Platform is a key driver for FGDC member agencies to improve the quality and access of their unique geospatial assets. It enhances and complements efforts that are underway to develop mission-specific geospatial applications in agencies such as NOAA, EPA, Interior and Agriculture.

"The ability to quickly visualize combinations of different types of data will allow decision makers and citizens to make timely, informed judgments on important land and resource issues," Castle emphasized. "The Platform will also promote efficiency and reduce duplication of effort by providing the means to create unique maps that can be built once and reused many times. In Interior, it truly will be the "platform" we build upon as we develop and share geospatial tools to enhance our specific mission -- the responsible use of the nation's land, water and coastal resources."

Examples of the information available on the initial version of the Geospatial Platform include environmental clean-up data from EPA and coastal environmental sensitivity data and historic hurricane data from NOAA. These data sets could be combined on a topographic map from Interior to assess hurricane vulnerability in coastal areas.

Developing an online infrastructure for increasing access to data, services and tools has been a cornerstone of the Obama Administration's Open Government Initiative. The official launch of the Geospatial Platform improves the availability and usability of geospatial information from all federal

agencies. The Platform will also integrate and display the geospatial information on the Administration's Data.gov site. The FGDC partnered with the General Services Administration to improve access to geospatial data on Data.gov, including the development of a new geospatial data catalog service at: geo.data.gov.

"With these tools, all users have the ability to view maps from their partners and peers, to review and change those maps by adding their own information and expertise, and then re-share the results with groups of people they define. The Geospatial Platform opens the door to collaboration around maps and the government's geospatial information in new and very exciting ways," said Malcolm Jackson, EPA's Chief Information Officer.

Joe Klimavicz, NOAA's Chief Information Officer, said, "We believe the Geospatial Platform will be an extremely valuable resource in both responding to, as well as sharing information on, future natural and man-made disasters. This authoritative resource of geospatial data and services will provide users with access to the information necessary to make informed decisions about critical issues."

At present, the Geoplatform.gov is not allowing new user accounts (temporarily). However, its host site is ArcGIS Online (the same program) is accessible and free @ <http://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html>.

Directions: *Click the link above; on the "My Map" page click "Sign In" at top right. Under "First Time Signing in?" click "Create an Account". Enter your information and submit, follow the instructions outlined in the registration email to complete the registration of your ESRI for your User Id. Return to the My Maps" using the same link above, once you have logged in you can now create, save, and share your maps.*

Conclusion:

The geoplatform.gov uses geospatial layers hosted on Geo.Data.gov, which has become the federal government's central repository for all geospatial data (including those layers compiled under the USGS's Geospatial One-Stop effort). This platform has the most comprehensive catalog of geospatial layers available in one location. However, finding and applying these layers is not as straightforward as in EPA's NEPAassist. Both of these systems offer unique functionality and can complement each other:

NEPAassist is a great tool for NEPA practitioners when determining the level of NEPA review required and it contains most of the layers needed when determining the presence of unique or extraordinary circumstances; furthermore these layers are consistent, authenticated, and easily applied. Ensuring the consistent presentation of information and confidence in the legal sufficiency of the data; NEPAassist is ideal tool for preliminary NEPA review and decision-making.

- <https://ssoprod.epa.gov/sso/jsp/NEPAlogin.jsp>

Geoplatform.gov allows a NEPA practitioner (generally during the EA or EIS process) to create their own unique/project specific map while applying numerous other previously vetted geospatial layers through Geo.Data.Gov. These maps can then be easily and intuitively customized and published as either a static map to facilitate information sharing through maps, or as a public scoping/comment map allowing the public to identify (on the map) unique issues via geo locations, a process that can add value and complement the traditional public scoping/comment period.

- <http://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html>