

Montana Land Information Advisory Council Meeting

Montana State Library | 1515 E 6th Avenue, Helena, Montana | Online Only
Wednesday, April 22, 2020 | 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Executive Summary

In Attendance:

Council Members or Designees: Robert Ahl – GIS Professionals Representative; Dawn Anderson – State Agency Representative; Allen Armstrong – U.S. Department of Interior Representative; Mike Bousliman – State Agency Representative; Gordon Conn – State Agency Representative; Janet Cornish – Public Utilities or Private Business Representative; Rep. Julie Dooling – Montana House of Representatives; Frank Dougher – Local Government Representative; Elaina Graham – USDA Representative; Jerry Grebenc – Public Utilities or Private Business Representative; Matt Heller – U.S. Department of Interior Representative; Valentijn Hoff – Montana University System Representative; Lee Macholz – Local Government Representative; Catherine Maynard – USDA Representative; Eric Spangenberg – Local Government Representative; Dan Stahly – MARLS Representative; Jennie Stapp – Council Chair; John Tubbs – State Agency Representative.

Guests: Jenny Connelley – MAGIP; Ken Wall – Montana State Library Commission; Mary Craige – Montana Department of Commerce; Samuel Scott – Missoula County; Katie Shank – DNRC.

Staff: Erin Fashoway, Michael Fashoway, John Kilgour, Troy Blandford.

Welcome & Introductions

Chair Stapp called the meeting to order at approximately 1:10 p.m., and the Council members, guests, and staff introduced themselves.

Administrative Updates/Agenda Changes

Chair Stapp explained several changes to the agenda. In the Standing Reports section of the agenda, Erin Fashoway will not report on the Montana Department of Transportation's RTN project. In the Current Business section of the agenda, prioritization of MLIA funds for transportation and elevation and prioritization of unallocated MLIA grant funds will be postponed to the Council's June meeting. Chair Stapp also explained that approval of the MLIA FY2021 grant budget will not be necessary at this meeting because that budget was already approved as part of the FY2021 Land Plan at the Council's November 2019 meeting.

Approval of Executive Summary

The executive summary of the Council's November 20, 2019, meeting was approved with no changes.

Standing Reports

- **Grant Review Subcommittee**
This report was postponed until later in meeting.
- **MAGIP Report**

Jenny Connelley provided the MAGIP report. MAGIP will try to hold next year's conference in Missoula the week after Easter. Nominations were recently closed for board member seats, and a Survey Monkey survey will be released soon for voting. The MAGIP constitution and bylaws will also be open for voting soon.

- **GIS Coordinator's Report**

- **GeoEnabled Elections**

Erin Fashway provided a report on GeoEnabled Elections (GEE) efforts in the state. Montana was selected to participate in the second round of NSGIC GEE pilot projects, which was supposed to start on April 27, 2020, but has been delayed a week. MSL is partnering with the Secretary of State's office, and two Montana counties have applied for grants to implement GEE strategies. More information will be posted as project plans are formulated. Erin referred the Council to the [NSGIC website](#) for further information about best practices for implementing GEE. Erin explained that Montana is in phase 2 of the pilot project with four or five other states. There is a lot of interest in the program because of the success of phase 1. More information will be provided as the project plan is developed.

Member Spangenberg suggested that Lewis and Clark County might be interested in partnering on GEE projects.

- **RTN MDT Research Team**

Discussion of this item was postponed.

Special Reports

- **FY2019/2020 MLIA Grant Recipient Report**

Erin Fashway reported on the current year's MLIA grants. There has not been a lot of spending activity, and there will be several extensions because of the COVID-19 disruptions. The tribal government grantees are pushing to get their survey projects completed. Erin has encouraged grantees who expect to need extensions to start on their extension requests soon. Extended FY2019 grants will also be concluding at the end of the fiscal year, and that information will be published at the end of May.

- **COVID-19 Special Report**

Erin provided an update on what MSL has done to support the state's COVID-19 response. Erin has been assisting Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) with GIS tasks and has developed a story map with information about the pandemic. The story map has generated a lot of good publicity for MSL, and it has been possible because of the existing MSDI infrastructure. It is a good illustration of how government operations can be informed by the MSDI and GIS.

Erin explained that the data is available in web services. The state has had to make sure that the dashboard follows HIPPA and other requirements. Erin worked with demographers from Esri to make sure that confidentiality was maintained.

Current Business

- **Approval of MLIA FY2021 Grant Budget**

No action was needed on this item. The MLIA FY2021 grant budget was already approved as part of the FY2021 Land Plan at the Council's November meeting. MSL has confirmed that there is sufficient funding in the account to fund the proposed budget.

- **Montana Land Information Act Program Grant Prioritization**

Member Bousliman updated the Council on the Grant Review Subcommittee's review of the FY2021 MLIA grant applications and the Subcommittee's funding recommendations. A total amount of \$162,000 was requested after

adjusting some of the grants and adding stipulations. There is enough funding for all applicants. All grants were at least partially funded if not fully funded. There were fewer applications than usual.

Erin Fashway would like to explore why the application numbers were so low and how the program could be better communicated to potential applicants. She would like to meet with the Subcommittee to discuss how to promote the program further. Erin mentioned the benefit of having the planning grant option in place, which the Subcommittee recommended for Fergus County. Erin also noted that there were no CadNSDI applicants this year.

Member Cornish asked for some explanation of the grant applications that were not fully funded, and Member Bousliman explained the following:

- Richland County made a large request, and the Subcommittee didn't think it could complete all proposed work in one year. The subcommittee recommended reducing the funding amount and splitting the project over multiple years.
- Sanders County's proposal had a lot in it that wasn't directly related to election activities. The Subcommittee narrowed down the proposal to focus on geo-enabled elections work.
- The Subcommittee felt that Blaine County didn't have enough funding for its proposed project, and the additional funding would help the county complete a successful project. Erin added that the \$11,665 awarded to Blaine County will cover the entire project cost, including Blaine County's proposed matching funds.

Member Cornish moved to approve the recommendations and the stipulations as presented by the Grant Subcommittee, and Member Spangenberg seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor, none opposed, and none abstaining.

Chair Stapp explained that the Council's funding recommendation will now go to the MSL commission for final approval. The Commission's meeting is currently scheduled for May 5th, but it may happen sooner than that.

- **Prioritization of MLIA Funds for Transportation and Elevation Themes**
This item was postponed for discussion at a later meeting.
- **Prioritization of Unallocated MLIA Grant Funds**
This item was postponed for discussion at a later meeting.

New Business

- **Differential Privacy – US Census Bureau – Mary Craigle, CEIC**
Mary Craigle, Montana Department of Commerce, gave a presentation to the Council about the U.S. Census Bureau's differential privacy policy for the 2020 Census. She began with an overview of the history of Census requirements to protect individual information. With the exception of Japanese-American internment during World War II, the Census Bureau has done very well at protecting personal identities. Current laws restrict the Bureau from releasing personally identifiable information (PII), but the differential privacy (DP) policy goes beyond that by restricting the release of the characteristics of an individual even if the identity of the individual is concealed. Basically, it is taking the data and making it "fuzzy" to protect personal identities. The Census Bureau has previously used statistical techniques to protect individual identities. The difference now is that the Bureau will provide metrics on how much they have altered the data, but they will not provide direction on how it has been changed. The Census Bureau's goal is to prevent people from using third-party data in conjunction with Census data to ascertain PII. The greater the amount of DP applied to the Census data, the greater the loss of accuracy in the data that is released.

Mary explained that the Census Bureau recently released 2010 Census data with DP applied to it to demonstrate how the approach will work. State Census officials were alarmed by the results. Data was drastically distorted for small geographic levels, and there was a big loss of accuracy. A lot of the data will simply not be released because

of its inaccuracy, and a lot of people who use data will suffer from it. Mary explained a couple examples of how the data is affected by DP and added that the new policy could affect how funding is applied and could mean that funding will not flow to necessary areas.

The Census Bureau has said that it didn't realize how badly the accuracy of data would be affected, and they have looked at scaling back the DP policy a bit, but they have not announced what they plan to change. Erin Fashway said that NSGIC has also been very concerned about this new practice and is looking into it. There has been some discussion of contacting attorneys general to take action on behalf of the states. Mary added that the only completely accurate data released from the 2020 Census will be each state's total population and total number of housing units. All other data will be affected by DP, including data used for Congressional redistricting.

The Council discussed several other questions and concerns related to the DP policy. Mary reiterated that a lot of vital data used by the state and other entities won't be released because it combines housing data with individual characteristics. She clarified that the same data is still being collected by the Census Bureau, but access to the data will be strictly limited. The Census does have a 72-year rule, at which point the data becomes publicly available. Member Graham asked what prompted this change in policy, and Mary explained that the Census Bureau has said that it is anticipating future problems that this new policy will help avoid. The Bureau is concerned about the ability of computers to match Census data with external data to figure out individual identities.

In conclusion, Mary informed the group that Montana's self-response rate for the 2020 Census currently stands at about 40%. Ideally, the state should have a 60-70% self-response rate by the end of the process.

- **Geospatial Maturity Assessment (GMA)**

Erin Fashway presented NSGIC's Geospatial Maturity Assessment to the Council and explained the different categories that were evaluated. Montana received an overall grade of B-. As part of the assessment, NSGIC examined every statewide layer. The hope is that the report cards provide an overall status on implementing the Geospatial Data Act. Compared to the rankings of other states, Montana is doing well. In many other states, data is not as widely available as it is in Montana. Erin encouraged the Council members to review the report and other states' report cards. Some states are missing from the report because they did not respond to the survey.

Member Maynard asked what states had imagery programs that scored highly, and Erin explained that a lot of states have statewide imagery collection efforts and don't rely on NAIP for imagery. Member Maynard pointed out that most of Montana's leaf-off season is covered with snow. Montana differs from eastern states in that regard.

Public Comment

There was no public comment. No announcements or new business were presented by the Council members.

Chair Stapp informed the Council that MSL will continue to follow the Governor's directives about public meetings and continue to hold them online as needed. The next Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 24, 2020.

Adjournment

Chair Stapp adjourned the meeting at 2:54 p.m.