**Southeaster Minnesota Counties GIS Users Group Meeting Summary**
**Red Wing, MN: 10am – 2:30pm, February 26th, 2004**

Attendees:
Sarah Midler, Goodhue County GIS
David Kiehne, Fillmore County
Jeremy Maul, Fillmore SWCD
Dave Wavrin, Steele County GIS
Ron Hensley, Olmsted County
Dean Schrandt, Dodge County Environmental
Jim Hruska, Dodge County SWCD
Greg Rowley, City of Rochester Public Utilities
Lavon Augustine, Goodhue County Zoning
David Windle, City of Roseville
Deb Jones, City of Falcon Heights
Carla Coates, Ramsey County GIS
Michelle Trager, Rice County Planning and Zoning
Tom Hoffman, Winona County
Mike Rowekamp, Rowekamp and Associates
Lisa Skipton, Goodhue County Land Use Management and Survey
Ryan Moore, City of Rochester Public Works
Jeff Ekblad, Goodhue County Survey

*(Task assignments are highlighted)*

1) **Introductions:**

Each attendee introduced themselves, shared what current GIS projects their department/agency is working on, and also shared what they would like to accomplish with the User's Group. Below is a table showing what current GIS projects are being worked on and how many of the participating agencies are involved in each project.

| Current Projects | Utilities | Rural Address /E911 | Hazard Mitigation | Parcels | Centerline Database | Internet | Plat Book | Waterways /Wetlands |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 |

Here is a summary of what members would like to accomplish through the User's Group: Get project ideas, create joint project opportunities, networking, data sharing, teach people, and learning what other communities/departments/agencies are doing with GIS.

2) **Presentation – Ramsey County Users Group; David Windle and Deb Jones**

The presentation included the following topics: What is a Users Group?, Why did we form the Ramsey County Group?, How did we form our Users Group?, A chronology of events, How does our Users Group function?, What have we achieved?, and How to make your group a success.

What is a Users Group?

- "An alliance of current and potential users of GIS technology with common interests in its development and use".

Why start a Users Group?

- To help each other become more successful in GIS efforts
- To support each other through mutually beneficial activities
- To share ideas
- To share costs
- To develop contacts and relationships
- Why go it alone?

For information on the history of the Ramsey County Users Group and their accomplishments, go to their website at: www.ramseygis.com/webpages

How to make your group a success:

- Ensure that there is a core group willing to donate considerable time to operating and promoting the group
- Develop a formal agreement (JPA) or similar legal instrument with each other to enable the group to negotiate on behalf of its members and for legal recognition of products and working relationships
- Member diversity is beneficial to foster creative discussions
- Meet regularly to ensure momentum is maintained
- Ensure members are willing to form sub-committees as needed to move issues quickly
- Share the responsibilities once the organization is established
- Remember, there is a strong and legitimate role for involvement of the private sector
- Have regular hands-on demonstrations at meetings
- Remember that not everyone is a GIS expert
- Always have refreshments at meetings
- Make sure meetings have a broad appeal
- Try to bring examples of "maps and apps" to meetings
- Try to include all members/attendees in the discussions
- Maintain a comprehensive mailing list to keep everyone informed regardless of attendance
- Post minutes and agendas on a web site or distribute via email where possible

David and Deb also gave a demonstration of their Users Group's online mapping service (website listed above) It is an ArcIMS site that has many data layers available along with aerial photos from 1940, 1953, 1964, 1985, and 2003. Currently there is only public information available but the group would like to add census and other demographic information to the site in the future.

**3) Presentation – Rowekamp & Associates; Mike Rowekamp**

The presentation included the following topics: Tips for a successful users group, ESRI software improvements; Arc 9.0, and a demonstration of RoweMap software. Tips for a successful users group are as follows:

- Don't create a JPA (Joint Powers Agreement) right away
- Establish leadership; Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, etc.
- Create an information directory
- Influence your community leaders
- Don't hold group meetings too frequently
- Meet someone new at each meeting
- Always include a training component
- Share best practices
- Make sure it's FUN!

Improvements in Arc 9.0:

- Raster management
- Better range of development platforms; java, C++, COM, NET, and more

RoweMap Demonstration:

Application created for light-users of GIS. Functionality includes (but not limited to):

- Create mailing labels, Create buffers, Hotlink unlimited number of items to a feature, Print a map, Basic query of features, Display basic or "Pro" toolbar, Utilize basic or ESRI symbols

**4) Presentation – Goodhue County; Sarah Midler**

The presentation was a brief overview of the most current GIS projects completed or still in-progress; street centerlines w/address ranges, All-Hazard Mitigation Plan, property information map site, geologic atlas, natural resource inventory, LIDAR data, and information on current data request fees.

**5) Discussion:**

- Suggestion was made to invite DNR staff from the Rochester office and alsoCounty Surveyors to the next meeting.
- Suggestion was made to invite Laurie Svein with NRCS to the next meeting
- Suggestion was made for the meeting host to invite their County Commissioners
- Suggestion was made to invite the Resource Community & Development group to the next meeting

- Suggestion was made to create an inventory list from each member including; Data that you want, Data that you currently have in GIS format, Type of software (including version), Aerial photos (year, color/bw), pricing structures. Members discussed and agreed that having an inventory of this type would help members understand where other departments are at right now and how we can work together in the future.
- Question was raised whether to keep "Southeastern Minnesota Counties GIS Users Group" as the group's name or to create a new name. Members discussed and came up with some ideas. Members decided to brainstorm name ideas and present them at next meeting.
- Question was presented by Sarah Midler-Goodhue County whether to vote on leadership positions. Members discussed and decided (no formal vote was taken) to wait until the next meeting to vote on the leaderhsip positions.
- Suggestion was made by Lisa Skipton-Goodhue County to post future meeting minutes, agendas, and information on the Goodhue County website. No official vote took place but group agreed to have the information posted on the Goodhue County website.
- Suggestion was given by Lisa Skipton-Goodhue County to schedule future meetings on same date, time, and place as the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) meetings. Committee discussed and decided to check in to the dates/times of future AMC meetings.
- A request for a volunteer to host the next users group meeting was made. Jeremy Maul-Fillmore County volunteered to host the next meeting.
- Suggestion was made to have the next meeting three monthes from now. Committee discussed and felt that holding the meeting in two monthes instead of three would work better. Committee agreed to having the next meeting in April. No official vote was taken.
- Suggestion was made by Jeremy Maul-Fillmore County to keep the time the same for the next meeting. Members discussed and agreed to keep the time for the next meeting at 10am – 2:30pm. No official vote was taken.
- Sarah Midler-Goodhue County will type minutes and send draft to other members along with a contact list

**Possible topics for next meeting:**

- ESRI Arc 9.0 demonstration - Invite local consultants - Have a hands-on demonstration
- Finding grant money and writing grants

Meeting adjourned at 2:20pm

**Next Meeting:**
April, 2004 10:00am – 2:30pm Fillmore County
*Exact location and time to be determined* (Jeremy Maul will set location and time)