Southeastern Minnesota GIS Users Group – Meeting Minutes

Olmsted County Planning Department: Friday, March 9th, 2007: 10:00am —12noon

Attendees:

Leanne Knott – City of Red Wing
Dave Wittman – Olmsted County
Dave Wavrin – Steele County
Tracy Schnell – MnDOT
Laurie Nagle – MnDOT
Danea Swenson – Fillmore County
Dan Krzoska – Houston County
Ryan Moore – Rochester Public Utilities
Sarah Schrader – Goodhue County
Tom Hoffmann – Winona County
Ron Hensley – Olmsted County
Michelle Trager – Rice County
Mary Sheehan – Olmsted County
Chris Moates – MnDOT
Jamie Schulz – DNR
Dave Kiehne – Fillmore County
Shawn Gertken – Wabasha County
Greg Rowley – Rochester Public Utilities
Dan Pitts – City of Northfield

Introductions

- There were 4 new people attending this meeting!

11:15 am
2007 Fall Conference Update

- The Fall GIS/LIS Consortium Conference will be held in Rochester in 2007! This will mark the first time that the conference has been held anywhere south of the Twin Cities. Since the conference is closer to home for our members, hopefully more people will be able to volunteer with the conference planning activities or get more involved by volunteering to present at the conference. It would be great to have a strong attendance and participation at this conference by our users group members.

GISCI – GIS Certification Institute www.gisci.org

- The GISCI created a GIS certification program a couple years ago. This is worth checking out. This GISP (GIS Professional) certification is very different than a GIS Certificate. The GISCI has worked with multiple agencies to compile a list of minimum standards that a GIS Professional should possess. The standards include Education, Experience, Contributions to the GIS profession, as well as signing a Code of Ethics.
- The GISCI understands and values the importance of involvement with others in the GIS profession. From being a member with a GIS users group to presenting at a conference or writing a newsletter article, all these things help improve our profession.

11:30 am Discussion: What's Next for the Users Group?

- The Pine to Prairie GIS users group (P2P) was brought up as an example of a successful users group from which we could model. P2P's members cover a large geographic area and the group holds quarterly meetings and workshops. The users group is governed by a volunteer Steering Committee. Check out their website at http://gis.pinetoprairie.org. This website also contains a Forum for the users group members to ask questions, share advice, tips and tricks, and much more. (Even if you're not a member of the users group, you can still view the forum topics and posted messages.)
- A suggestion was made to send a questionnaire to users group members in order to collect feedback from all members, not just those present at this meeting. A suggestion was made to use the survey software called "Survey Monkey" (www.surveymonkey.com). Access is free but there are a couple restrictions. We are allowed to create a maximum of 10 survey questions and can have up to 100 survey responses. This type of survey should be very helpful to our group even with these limitations.

- A suggestion was made to have a round-robin introduction at each meeting including a brief overview from each member regarding what projects they are currently working on. This would be a great way to inform members and make connections for project collaboration.
    - At this time, we had a round-robin introduction of the attending members and a brief overview of their current GIS projects.
- Brainstorm for possible new members; City Councils, non-GIS users, vendors, Waseca and LeSeuer counties
- Brainstorm Survey Questions:
    - How often should the group meet?
    - Location of the meetings
    - Length of meetings
    - Do members plan on attending future meetings? If not, why not? Are there any barriers to attending these meetings?
    - What types of presentations should we have? Vendors, demos, mini-workshops, members
    - Should we create a Steering Committee?
    - What should the users group pursue? -Logo, own website, use Yahoo groups for communication
    - Find out more about our members:
        - Level of GIS experience
        - What type of software is currently being used
        - How many users group meetings have you attended
    - Are members interested in holding workshops?
    - Depending on the time of the meetings, how should we handle lunch time?
        - Keep the meeting going and order in lunch
        - Break for lunch
        - Bring your own lunch
    - How to attract new members
- A survey will be created and sent out to members. The compiled results of the survey will be sent out soon after the closing of the survey. These results will be the main discussion topic at our next users group meeting.

Other news:

- Tom Hoffmann mentioned that there is a 3M print driver that costs about $500 that works really great.
- Sarah Schrader mentioned that in ESRI ArcGIS 9.2, there is a quirk when creating new datasets through geoprocessing. After running a "Clip" operation or something similar, the resulting data layer can be added directly to your map project. However, with the 9.2 software, this newly-created data layer might still be considered a 'temporary file'. Once your file has been created and is automatically added to your map, RIGHT-CLICK on the new data layer and select "Data", and then select "Make Permanent". (If "Make Permanent" is grayed-out then your data layer is already permanent and has been saved.)
- Shawn Gertken mentioned how to successfully add an excel (.xls) data table into ArcGIS. After clicking on the "Add Data" icon, navigate to your excel data table. Double-click on your selected excel data table. After double-clicking, your data table will break into its list of separate worksheets. Now, select the worksheet you would like to add and then click "Add". ArcGIS does not understand excel files with multiple worksheets so you need to select just an individual worksheet to bring into ArcMap.

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 31st 10am-12noon
Olmsted County Planning Department, Conference Rooms A & B