

NSDI Cooperative Agreements Program
Don't Duck Metadata
Metadata Implementation Project – Final Report
(3/28/05)

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Project Narrative

Before this grant, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) had at approximately 100gb of GIS data on a server, with NO metadata, and no one trained to create metadata. As a result of this grant, WPC has 20 staff who have received metadata training, and a great jumpstart on creating metadata for everything on our server. The amount of data publicly discoverable on the web has increased from fewer than 10 datasets to over one hundred.

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy partners with The Nature Conservancy and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to form the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP). This program is a member of NatureServe – the heritage program network.

Training:

With the USGS funding for this project, we were able to hold a 2-day training for twenty-eight people, all of whom were either employees of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and/or the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. Of those trained, 16 staff are still employees of WPC. The training was conducted by Lynn Kutner of NatureServe.

Since no employees at WPC had prior experience with metadata creation, this training was a great boost to our program's and our organization's ability to document the data that we are constantly producing. Metadata training is now something we plan to hold on a regular basis at the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, along with our current GIS, GPS, and data procedures training.

Metadata creation experience and organizational support:

Over a dozen employees of WPC have actually produced metadata as a result of the training and funding provided in this grant. About one-third of these staff now have significant experience in creating metadata.

The ability given to us by this grant to take on our metadata needs in an aggressive, high-profile way has significantly raised WPC's awareness of metadata. The importance of, and need for good metadata is now widely recognized here, and the WPC GIS Users Group is now formulating organizational policy on metadata training, creation, quality, and dissemination. WPC now expects every staff person involved in dataset creation or modification to create the accompanying metadata.

Data Serving:

We are increasing our ability at WPC to serve our own datasets from our own website, and should have several datasets available by the end of the year. As shown in the "Measurable Project Results" section below, the number of datasets produced at WPC and available on a data clearinghouse has increased dramatically from the handful that were published before. Metadata

and datasets will be served on the Pennsylvania clearinghouse node: Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access (<http://www.pasda.psu.edu/>).

Measurable Project Results:

- The total number of PNHP and WPC staff trained to create metadata was 28.
- The number of individuals currently remaining at WPC who are creating metadata is 12.
- The number of metadata files or datasets documented is about 400.
- The number of metadata files delivered to the data clearinghouse (PASDA) that will be available to the public is 123.
- The number of datasets with metadata files delivered to the data clearinghouse (PASDA) that will be available to the public is 67.
- The number of datasets with NBII metadata is 16.

Next Steps

There are an additional 100 metadata files that may be delivered to the data clearinghouse this year. They are either in progress, or there are data release questions remaining.

We are now positioned to deal with remaining issues in metadata management and service. Our GIS Users Group is tackling the issues of developing clear, effective file creation tracking and quality control procedures for the metadata produced by our staff. This is likely to lead to a new GIS manager position. We also recognize the need for training in how to better manage spatial data catalogs. Periodic training to refresh staff and train new hires still needs to be developed regarding the purpose and technical aspects of creating and effectively using our metadata resources.

Feedback on Cooperative Agreements Program:

The training was extremely important. I think it is a great strength of the program that this is emphasized. This grant allowed us to take the time to create much better documentation for the data that we have. PNHP is grant and contract-dependent, and this grant was the only way we could have set aside enough time to attempt what we have done.

The time frame (1 year) was a challenge for us for several reasons. The first was that this grant was not received until the 2nd half of our fiscal year (which was fully budgeted), and we were unable to begin using it until the next fiscal year began. The staff position that was originally the project leader on this grant was vacant shortly after we began utilizing grant funds, and remained open through the end of the funded period. The supervisor had to take this grant on while experiencing a significant staff shortage. The extension we received was very helpful.

Prior to applying for this grant, we did not have the experience to fully understand what files were appropriate for posting and how much time it would take to make high-quality metadata.

While we made well over 300 files, only a portion of these were suitable datasets for posting to a clearinghouse node. The others were either simply subsets of publicly available datasets, or too sensitive for posting in any form (state and federal agency restrictions, landowner privacy, etc.) If we were to do this again, we would propose the creation of fewer files for posting to a clearinghouse node in a year.

One thing that we suggest you provide to future applicants to this grant is help regarding the many software programs that can be used to make metadata. We prefer ESRI's ArcCatalog for ease of use, and we now have licenses for all users on site. This was not the case when the grant began however, and we made some metadata with the free DataLogr program from the Minnesota clearinghouse node. The application's creator even helped us to customize the stylesheet for Pennsylvania. While the metadata grant program does provide funding for software, a very important need for grantees, it is important to note that there are free software programs like DataLogr available, so organizations can more freely choose the areas – training, staff time, or equipment – where the grant funding will help them the most.

In summary, this has been a great learning experience for the staff involved, has increased the sophistication of our data documentation, opened more of our data up to public use, and made in-house use of our data easier and more efficient. We believe that having good metadata supports good relationships with our data partners and data requestors as well. Thank you very much for this opportunity.