

**National Geospatial Advisory Committee (NGAC) Paper:  
Comments on NAPA Report on FEMA Flood Mapping Program  
June 9, 2015**

**Summary**

As enhanced national elevation surveys bring increasing benefits to society, progressively more intricate coordination by federal, state, and other agencies on unified data acquisition investments will lead to more efficient and effective surveys, thus bringing greater benefits to all. *The NGAC therefore recommends:*

- NGAC endorses the recommendation in the National Academy of Public Administration's (NAPA) "FEMA Flood Mapping: Enhancing Coordination to Maximize Performance"<sup>i</sup> report that "The Office of Management and Budget should use the 3DEP implementation plan for nationwide elevation data collection to guide the development of the President's annual budget request."
- NGAC recommends that the FGDC community consider and take action on additional mechanisms described in this paper to facilitate further coordination under 3DEP

The NGAC also approved the following resolution at its June 2015 meeting:

"The NGAC endorses the following recommendation in the National Academy of Public Administration's (NAPA) "FEMA Flood Mapping: Enhancing Coordination to Maximize Performance" report:

Recommendation 15: The Office of Management and Budget should use the 3DEP implementation plan for nationwide elevation data collection to guide the development of the President's annual budget request.

The NGAC encourages the FGDC agencies and OMB to consider and take action to implement this recommendation."

**Background**

The NGAC has provided ongoing advice on the 3D Elevation Program (3DEP). Current active topics include the need for a unified data acquisition strategy across Federal agencies and other stakeholders, coordination of 3DEP data acquisition under the Broad Agency Announcement announced in FedBizOpps in July 2014, and coordination of emerging lidar technologies across the public and private sectors for eventual commercialization. At present, FGDC has requested that NGAC provide recommendations regarding: 1) NAPA Report Recommendation; 2) 3DEP Data Acquisition Coordination, and 3) Emerging Lidar Technology.

## **Study Question 1 - NAPA Report Recommendation**

In 2012, Congress directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through the Biggert Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 to contract with the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) to prepare a report on how FEMA can improve interagency and intergovernmental coordination on flood mapping, including a funding strategy and how FEMA can establish joint funding mechanisms with other federal, state and local governments to share the collection and utilization of data among all governmental users.

The resulting NAPA report, "FEMA Flood Mapping: Enhancing Coordination to Maximize Performance" includes Finding 4d which stated: "The 3DEP plan for a jointly funded program to collect elevation data systematically on a nationwide basis offers a significantly more cost effective alternative to current piece-meal efforts, and will benefit not only FEMA's flood mapping efforts, but also users across the federal government, as well as states and localities."

This was followed by Recommendation 15: "The Office of Management and Budget should use the 3DEP implementation plan for nationwide elevation data collection to guide the development of the President's annual budget request."

To implement this recommendation, the report urged OMB to work with USGS and other agencies to define joint funding mechanisms to support the 3DEP implementation plan.

In its guidance to NGAC, FGDC noted that though there is conceptual support for 3DEP among several Federal agencies, coordination across budgets remains a challenge to unifying data acquisition investments into a single, collaboratively funded program. FGDC therefore requested recommendations on advancing the NAPA recommendation.

### **Considerations:**

- Recognition of the broad benefits of new elevation surveys is escalating
- Many agencies are flying lidar
- Reduced duplication of effort will result in better surveys for all
- Ideally, all surveys are compatible and usable by multiple agencies
- Mechanisms are needed to further encourage coordination
- Benefits include improved surveys, avoidance of costs, and a simplified process
- Disadvantage for agencies is loss of control
- There are broad federal efforts to reduce duplication of effort
- Federal acquisition rules & bilateral agreements can play a role
- Various past programs can serve as potential models
- Mechanisms need to encompass state agencies

## Potential Mechanisms for advancing the NAPA recommendation

- Awareness: Enhanced awareness of the broad benefits of coordination will assist all efforts, and all interested parties are playing a role. 3DEP presents a unique opportunity for collaboration between all levels of government, to leverage the services and expertise of private sector mapping firms that acquire the data, and to create jobs now and in the future. For example:
  - A White House fact sheet on climate change highlighted the importance of 3DEP in preparing for flood, water resource, coastal erosion, storm surge, and landslide hazards.
  - A successful 3DEP Stakeholder Meeting was presented in conjunction with the National Surveying, Mapping and Geospatial Conference in April, 2015.
- OMB Circular A-16 Portfolio Management: GAO Recommendation 13-94 advocated FGDC implementation of and annual reporting on OMB portfolio management guidance to better facilitate coordination of, improve accountability for, and reduce duplication in federal geospatial investments.
- 3DEP Broad Agency Announcement (BAA): the BAA is a publicly accessible process that facilitates development of partnerships for the completion of 3DEP surveys.
- Budget crosscut: the Biggert-Waters Act requires that relevant agency heads work together to ensure that flood mapping is shared, and that they submit an interagency budget crosscut and coordination report to the appropriate authorizing and appropriating committees no later than 30 days after the submission of the President’s budget to Congress, demonstrating intra-agency alignment of efforts including elevation surveys. The NAPA panel recommended that OMB work with FEMA and its major partners to use the budget crosscut required by the Biggert-Waters Act to drive more strategic operational and funding coordination.
- FEMA Technical Mapping Advisory Council (TMAC): the TMAC was established to advise FEMA regarding the national flood mapping program authorized under the Biggert-Waters Act. The TMAC is required to make recommendations on how to improve, in a cost-effective manner, flood insurance maps. The NAPA panel urged FEMA to use the TMAC as a platform to drive greater interagency and intergovernmental funding coordination.
- Additional arrangements: it is possible that additional arrangements could be put into place through appropriations language or a bill.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.napawash.org/2013/1568-fema-flood-mapping-enhancing-coordination-to-maximize-performance.html>