

National Boundaries Group (NBG) – Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) Annual Report Submission – 2016

The NBG is an interagency working group coordinated by the FGDC and contributes to the FGDC mission of fostering collaboration and developing partnerships for the advancement the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). The purpose of this group is to develop nationally consistent and integrated boundaries with the same geographic base. This group meets quarterly to report on progress toward making sure federal boundary sources are current, consistent and accurate.

2016 Accomplishments:

National Boundaries Group Organization and Operations

The NBG continued collaboration with the cadastral subcommittee to identify boundaries coincident with cadastral features such as parcels and the public land survey system. The U.S. Census Bureau has operationalized the results of this activity into the Boundary Quality Assessment and Reconciliation Project (BQARP) during FY 2016 and into FY 2017. The NBG and the U.S. Census Bureau also reviewed public land types to determine which categories should be included in the MAF/TIGER Database (MTDb).

Federal Lands Working Group

The Federal Lands Working Group (FLWG) is a subgroup of the NBG. The goal of the FLWG is to develop a data standard and the organizational strategies for federally owned lands by publishing an aggregated federal lands geodatabase to meet common agency needs. Further, the FLWG seeks to provide a platform for federal agencies to identify and review boundary gaps and overlaps. The group is working to automate the translation of land data from federal agencies into the format of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Protected Areas Database of the United States (PAD-US). The USGS Gap Analysis Program (GAP) released a PAD-US update (version 1.4) in May 2016, including a complete replacement of federal lands developed through FLWG collaboration. The U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service have submitted draft data for the PAD-US for review by the USGS. The Bureau of Land Management expects to submit additional updates to the PAD-US in January 2017. These updates of federal lands data managed by the respective agencies will be reviewed by the USGS for incorporation into the next version of PAD-US (version 2.0)

The FLWG facilitated cross-agency cooperation to create these automated tools, making it easier for federal agencies to crosswalk their data into PAD-US 2.0. Along with the improvement of the PAD-US, the FLWG developed a tool to harness review comments regarding federal lands data, documented source data translation into PAD-US schema, needs to increase efficiency, and significantly reduced boundary overlap errors between agency datasets. The Department of Interior (DOI) Geographic Advisory Committee acknowledged PAD-US as the official inventory of public lands, and other protected areas by recognizing PAD-US as an A-16 layer in the cadastral theme. The FLWG is preparing a PAD-US and FLWG overview for presentation during the DOI's Office of Policy Analysis seminar series in January 2017. The FLWG posts

meeting notes, updates, and events to the GeoPlatform website. The group maintains monthly calls and primary contacts from each federal land management agency. The FLWG recently updated the group's fact sheet to summarize current objectives, recent accomplishments, and primary contacts.

Tribal Boundaries Subgroup

The Tribal Boundaries subgroup formed early in FY 2016 and is co-chaired by members from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The subgroup membership consists of federal agencies, private industry, one tribal organization, and federally recognized tribes. The Tribal Boundaries group formed because members of the NBG had significant interest in sharing information about tribal boundaries, and has hosted presentations from the U.S. Census Bureau, Environmental Protection Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Energy, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the National Park Service. The following are preliminary goals for the subgroup:

1. Discuss and list agency needs for tribal boundaries;
2. Discuss and document definitions for the types of tribal lands and boundaries;
3. Discuss and document who is responsible for the authoritative dataset, what is the authoritative dataset, what constitutes an authoritative dataset, and what defines or is needed to be an authoritative dataset;
4. Discuss and list ways that agencies can collaborate, reduce duplication and share tribal boundary information; and
5. Create a public resource for education on tribal boundaries for agencies writing legislation or creating programs.

International Boundaries

The International Boundary Commission (IBC) and the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) updated the NBG on their work improving the international boundaries with Canada and Mexico. The NBG continued its collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau, IBC, and IBWC to update the international boundaries in the MTDb.

Meetings Held

The NBG held two meetings in 2016 with one planned for October 2016:

1. Tribal Lands and Boundary Updates – February 26, 2016 ESRI Federal User conference, Washington, D.C.
2. International Boundaries – May 26, 2016.
3. To be Announced – October 2016.

The NBG also presented at the 2016 ESRI User Conference in San Diego, CA.

Significant goals for 2017

1. The NBG will hold quarterly meetings to summarize progress of ongoing tasks
2. The U.S. Census Bureau will continue to provide quarterly updates on the BQARP.
3. The FLWG will improve the efficiency of annual federal lands data aggregation for the PAD-US through source data documentation. The FLWG will also continue to review, identify, and correct major topology errors
4. The Tribal Boundaries subgroup will continue to document how agencies use tribal boundary data, what data quality is required, and the desired boundary attributes. When available, the GeoPlatform website will host this information. These activities support the established preliminary goals.
5. The U.S. Census Bureau will continue to update the international boundaries in the MTDb using IBC and IBWC boundaries.

Challenges/Opportunities for 2017

1. Outreach to federal agencies that consume or produce datasets that define or affect boundaries to:
 - a. Reduce duplication of effort; and
 - b. Increase the overall quality of shared boundary data.
2. Continue to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas to improve the overall management and availability of boundaries in federal datasets.
3. Identify collaborative opportunities with tribal, federal, state, and local governments to share accurate boundary data.