Review of FGDC standards program of work Soils Geographic Data Standard, FGDC-STD-006 (endorsed 1997) Interview with Jim Fortner, NRCS, 2006-03-27

1. What's the problem (issue) that the standard is trying to address? *This should be stated in the introduction to the standard*

From the introduction to the standard:

The overall objective of the Soil Geographic Data Standard is to standardize the names, definitions, ranges of values, and other characteristics of soil survey map attribute data developed by the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS).

Jim noted that the soil survey map serves as the base layer for natural resources assessment and is used for many different purposes.

- 2. What are the complementary standards (voluntary or accepted) that support this standard?
 - a. If the standard refers to other standards, have the referenced standards changed in a way that requires changes to this standard?
 - b. Since this standard was adopted or last reviewed, have new standards been adopted elsewhere that should be referenced in this standard?

References identified in the standard are:

NSSH National Soil Survey Handbook, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 1996 SSM Soil Survey Manual, Ag. Handbook 18, Soil Survey Division Staff, USDA, 1993 Keys to Soil Taxonomy, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Seventh Edition, 1996

NASIS Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Soil Information System

In addition, there is a normative annex that provides a completed template for metadata to accompany soils map data. The metadata standard used is the FGDC Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Metadata, version 1.0.

Jim stated that there are nearly 3000 metadata files for soils surveys. Each file is tied to a soil survey area, which is often coincident with a county. The entry for the Keyword Thesaurus field references FIPS 6-3; however, since the Soils Geographic Data Standard was endorsed, FIPS 6-3 was superseded by FIPS 6-4, COUNTIES AND EQUIVALENT ENTITIES OF THE UNITED STATES, ITS POSSESSIONS, AND ASSOCIATED AREAS (see http://www.itl.nist.gov/fipspubs/fip6-4.htm). INCITS Technical Committee L1,

http://www.itl.nist.gov/fipspubs/fip6-4.htm). INCITS Technical Committee L1, Geographic Information Systems, has voted to advance a draft standard that will replace FIPS 6-4 once the draft standard has been approved as an American National Standard.

3. What standard(s) does this FGDC standard support?

None.

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4. Are the standards in active use?

Used by NCSS. Annual report results (TBD) might indicate other users.

- 5. Is the standard a 'Government Unique Standard'? Yes.
 - a. If so, has it been examined to see if Voluntary Consensus Standards might now be in place? Jim is not aware of any voluntary consensus standards that might exist. NCSS is the only group that develops general soils survey data.
 - i. If a corresponding Voluntary Consensus Standard exists, should the Consensus standard be considered for adoption to replace the existing standard?
 - ii. If a corresponding Voluntary Consensus Standard does not exist, should this standard be moved to a national standard?
 - b. Is it appropriate to remain in FGDC? Why or why not?

Jim said that he doesn't have a feel for the answer.

- 6. Who are the important stakeholders that need input into the review of this standard?
 - a. Which Federal agencies in addition to the agency with maintenance authority should the review committee include?
 - b. Which non-Federal agencies should the review committee include?

Forest Service, BLM, NPS, BIA; State Ag experiment stations

7. Are there editorial errors that you are aware of since this FGDC standard was endorsed?

Jim is not aware of editorial issues that might have surfaced since the FGDC standard was endorsed.

8. Are there technical errors or technical changes that you are aware since this FGDC standard was endorsed?

Yes.

Jim noted that about 90% of the Soils Geographic Data Standard is still good, but some elements have changed. The Standard needs to be updated to reflect the changes in the content structure.

The normative annex on metadata will need to be updated to reflect the North American profile of ISO Metadata standards (once the profile is complete).

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Also, the entry for the Keyword Thesaurus will need to refer to the American National Standard that will replace FIPS 6-3.

9. Other:

At this point, Soils Data SC is inactive. Jim Fortner, as Chair, has requested inactive status with the FGDC. Not much of anything has been accomplished in the past 2 years or so. However, the charter was updated and a work plan was submitted for 2006.

The NCSS standards working group is made up of many of the same folks who would make up the FGDC Soils Subcommittee. We recommend that NCSS represent the soils data theme directly on FGDC. NRCS would serve as sponsor and maintenance authority for the Soils Geographic Data Standard. NRCS is the lead agency for NCSS.

Based on your answers to the above, the sponsor team recommends the following:

1. The standard to be issued with no modifications, with the expectation that changes will occur in another year or year and a half.

Justification:

Jim expects that changes in the standard will occur in 1-1.5 years once the structure of data is determined. Drivers for the changes in the structure of the data are primarily due to changes in customer requirements, the type of data and information that is needed, and modifications in the technology. Once the structure of the data is better defined, the FGDC Standard should mimic the structure, but at the same time the standard should be written in a way so that changes can be managed dynamically.