

DATE 3-10-05
SR. 98

Testimony of Jeff Brandt
Before the House State Administration Committee
Senate Bill 98

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Jeff Brandt. I am the Acting Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the state of Montana. I also rise in support of SB98. My comments will be limited to a very brief description of GIS, the types of GIS data that we need to manage, and how the bill is structured.

GIS, or geographic information systems, is a powerful technology that gives us the ability to analyze issues or problems in the geographic space---simply put----a map. But unlike a traditional map, GIS marries map making with the power of a computer. The uses for GIS data are almost endless so I'll give you just a few examples:

- 1. Developers can look at maps that include roads, and terrain, and water drainage as they imagine ways to create subdivisions
- 2. Engineers can see soil types layered against elevation characteristics and river drainages as they design highways.
- 3. Wood products companies can understand vegetation coverage, wildlife impacts, and access issues as they determine the most profitable and responsible ways to approach forest management.

The Governor's council on GIS, the Montana Geographic Information Council, or MGIC, has defined 12 data "layers" that are considered "priority" data layers for development and maintenance statewide. I have included a handout with my testimony that lists these layers (see attached). Each layer has a different story---some already exist and just need to be maintained; others need to be developed. I want to touch on just three of these layers:

- 1. Land Ownership. The statewide Land Ownership Layer has been built but has no funding source to keep the data current as land ownership changes, for example, subdivisions, parcel splits, and land acquisitions. This layer was built in the late 1990's and has proven to be one of the most active and sought after layers of data by citizens and

businesses. I believe you will hear a great amount of testimony about the importance of this layer, and the need to keep it current.

2. Imagery. Today we have access to some aerial photography, much of which was collected by the Federal Government over ten years ago. The usefulness of these data are rapidly diminishing. This is a good example of where SB98 funds can be used to leverage greater investments in the state by matching federal funds.

3. Jurisdictional Boundaries. It may surprise you to know that Montana does not have a statewide layer that accurately portrays the boundaries of the wide variety of jurisdictions, including voting precincts, school districts, improvement districts, etc. There may be some of these collected by certain counties, but nowhere is there a statewide, standardized collection that can be relied upon, and one that can be synchronized with the Land Ownership or Transportation layers.

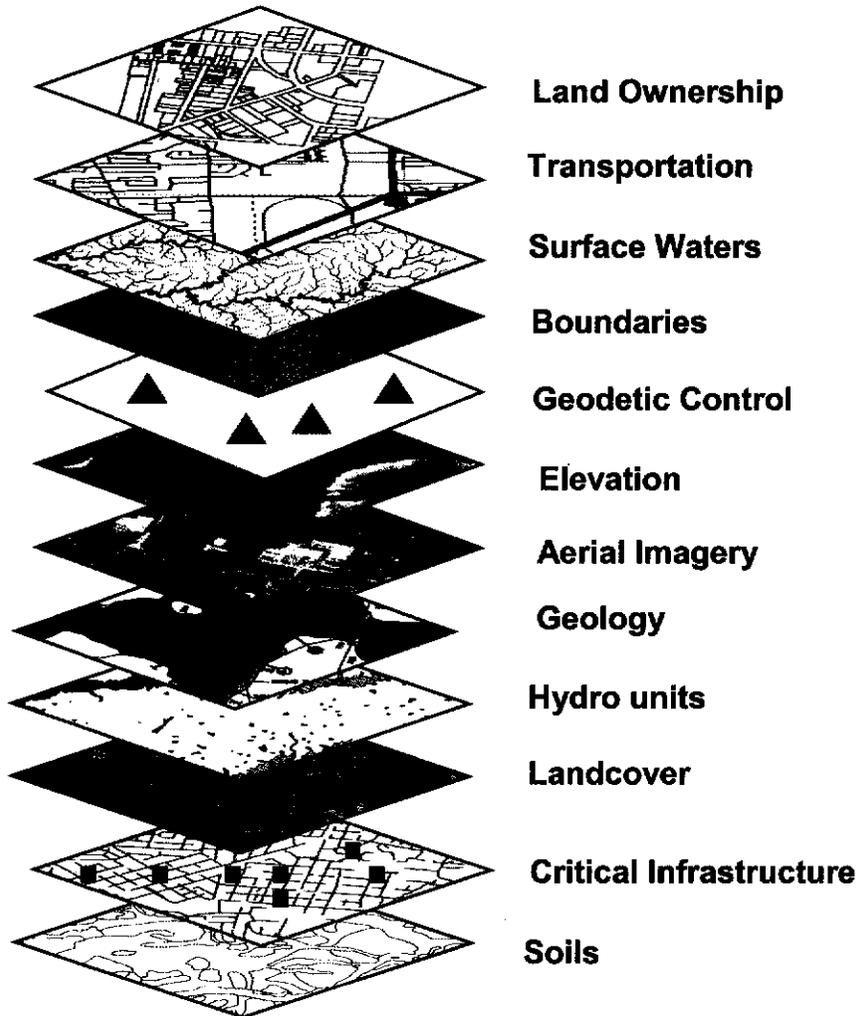
My agency, working with stakeholders, will be responsible for developing a annual plan that describes how the funds can best be used. That plan will then be reviewed, modified and endorsed by the Montana Land Information Council established in the bill. Based upon that plan, grant proposals will be accepted by the department and reviewed and awarded in cooperation with the Council. Our department's coordination role will be funded through this effort. This bill is expected to generate approximately \$1.4 million annually through an increase in the recording fees for documents recorded at counties throughout the state. The bill stipulates that 25% of the fees remain with the counties to be used to assist in the data layer development efforts and to be used by counties for local GIS projects. 75% of the funds will be transferred to the department to be used in the granting process I just described to standardize data statewide.

Members of the committee, I urge your support for Senate Bill 98. I will be available for questions. Thank you.

MONTANA LAND INFORMATION ACT OVERVIEW

PURPOSE: The Montana Land Information Act (MLIA) will develop a standardized, sustainable method to collect, maintain, and distribute information in digital formats about the natural and man-made land characteristics of Montana. Land information changes continuously and is needed by businesses, citizens, and governmental entities in digital formats in order to be effective and productive. The Land Information Act will ensure that land information in digital formats is collected consistently, maintained accurately and with standards, and made available in common ways for all potential uses, both private and public.

TYPES OF LAND INFORMATION: The Governor's Council on GIS has prioritized 12 data layers as being important for businesses and citizens to meet their land information needs:



BUSINESS APPLICATIONS: Businesses rely heavily on access to land information in order to make sound decisions.

- ✓ Realtors, insurers, and bankers need access to ownership and jurisdictional data.
- ✓ Emergency responders, including wildfire managers need access to road locations and addresses, ownership, aerial imagery, terrain and jurisdictional data.
- ✓ Developers need access to floodplain, transportation, and ownership data.
- ✓ Hunter/Sportsman groups need access to ownership, and terrain data.
- ✓ Environmental groups need access to aerial imagery, ownership, surface waters, and watershed data.
- ✓ Agricultural/Mining groups need access to surface waters, watersheds, aerial imagery and ownership data.
- ✓ Many, many more applications for businesses and citizens.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING SOURCE NEEDED: In order to build, maintain, standardize, integrate and distribute these data layers once so they can be used many times, a sustainable funding source is needed. The MLIA would assess a \$1.00 fee for each page of recorded documents at all Montana counties. This is an appropriate fee because typically these recorded documents have an effect on or change the nature of previously recorded land information. This fee would create approximately \$1.4 million per year to be used to develop and maintain critical land information data layers.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE FUND: The Department of Administration, working with the Governor's Council, is charged with administering the fund, developing annual plans, managing a granting program to distribute 75% of the funds, and monitoring the effective use of the funds to ensure that standardized and usable data layers are built.

COUNTIES SHARE IN THE FUNDS: Counties are key players and are critical to the proper management of Montana land information. Therefore, counties will directly receive 25% of the fees collected to better be able to work with the state's efforts, and to accomplish local land information projects.

FEDERAL FUNDING MATCH: The MLIA could provide a funding source to match federal funds that are periodically available to develop data layers.