

Regional Geospatial Resource Center Proposal

Southeast Idaho

Scope and purpose

As part of the Strategic Plan for Development and Deployment of Idaho's Spatial Data Infrastructure, here after referred to as ISDI, Regional Resource Centers (RRC) have been identified as "hubs" representing different areas of the state to help connect local activities to support the statewide ISDI.

As outlined in the ISDI strategic plan, each RRC is expected to be supported by existing institutions or groups. Also outlined in the ISDI is the potential for RRC's to provide 1) service and support functions not unlike answering technical questions, 2) general consultation regarding GIS development, 3) training and continuing education, and 4) physical sites for meetings, data distribution, and other related activities.

As the GIS Training and Research Center (GIS TReC) at Idaho State University has been facilitating many of the same goals since 1998, we propose to maintain this existing relationship to further grow the RRC for Southeast Idaho.

GIS in eastern Idaho has been developing at a steady rate over the last 20 years. While pockets of GIS infrastructure exist throughout the region in the public, private, and academic sectors, the RRC would act as the backbone to provide structure and cohesion and consequently promote commerce, enhance government effectiveness, and create more opportunities for continuing education of the profession. The RRC would provide an anchor-point for the objectives of the ISDI for southeastern Idaho, and support efforts from the most basic grassroots activities to state-wide Enterprise projects. The RRC for southeastern Idaho would endeavor to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Support ISDI objectives through the development of unified and integrated framework datasets throughout the region. These regional datasets will be ready for integration at the state-wide level. As outlined in the ISDI, key milestones include working on developing "Core Data and Service operations" and establishing a stewardship structure to maintain those data sets.
2. Facilitate mentoring programs that identify individuals or organizations in the region with skill sets that have similar business models or mandates. Collaborate on ISDI standard operating procedures as well as best practices to fulfill their individual mandates.
3. Enhance professional networking and collaboration through the use of existing Internet resources (e.g., list-serve or "yahoo groups") and quarterly in-person meetings designed to rotate through the SE Idaho region. In addition, the GIS TReC at ISU will leverage its state-of-the-art; high definition distance education and conferencing equipment to better connect the members of the SE Idaho GIS Users' Group.

In addition, the RRC for SE Idaho will maintain a strong working relationship with the Eastern Idaho RRC as these two groups already have a history of data sharing and integration.

4. Promote standards related to data quality and accessibility through awareness-building, open discussion, and continuing education.
5. Support and promote geographic information systems through community outreach activities designed to broaden awareness of GIS (e.g., World GIS Day).

6. Develop, recommend, and promote the region's GIS infrastructure as a part of a larger GIS community by:
 - a. Identifying existing geospatial data along with contact information to allow improved access to these data.
 - b. Holding at least one regional meeting annually to promote GIS as a profession and science, ISDI initiatives.
 - c. Identify individuals who would like to be involved with the Idaho Geospatial Committee (IGC) for this region, and elect a representative to serve on the executive committee of IGC
7. Promote data sharing and dissemination using Insideldaho.

We propose the RRC for SE Idaho be established at ISU's GIS TReC in Pocatello and serve the ten-county region shown in figure 1. This geographic region is based on an existing GIS community that currently participates collectively to various degrees, albeit in an informal fashion. Leveraging existing network and information technology resources minimizes the need for close geographic proximity and will allow for full participation in SE Idaho Users' Group activities despite weather conditions, travel restrictions, or other limiting factors.

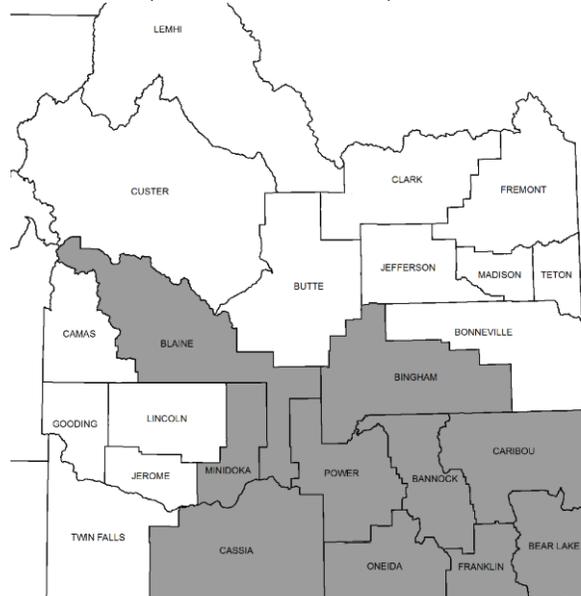


Figure 1. Map of the SE Idaho region

Administration

ISU's GIS TReC was initially developed through funding provided by the Idaho State Board of Education in 1997. One of the roles of the GIS TReC was to promote and continue development of GIS in SE Idaho. Since that time, the GIS TReC has made numerous achievements toward that end and is seen by the SE Idaho GIS Users' group as the logical physical location for the RRC. This decision is based upon the fact that substantial GIS infrastructure has already been developed at the GIS TReC through numerous investments in emerging network technologies (e.g., gigabit Ethernet), Global positioning system base stations (4), and state-of-the-art, high definition distance education/conferencing equipment. Thus, the SE Idaho GIS Users' group seeks to eliminate replication of efforts and unnecessary expenditures for the State of Idaho.

Services and Resources

The SE Idaho RRC will

- represent the SE Idaho GIS users' group on relevant statewide committees
- provide a physical location and central contact to facilitate a regional forum for discussion, collaboration, and training
- facilitate implementation of, and monitor maintenance of ISDI within the region
- facilitate the effective use of geospatial programs and products by providing technical support for data as well as metadata creation and maintenance
- provide improved data discovery and distribution by leveraging the power of geospatial web services and improved implementation of the GIS TReC's existing spatial library (note: currently, over 30,000 datasets are available at this library).

Staffing

(phased in at various levels as sustainable financial resources are secured)

- SE Idaho RRC Geospatial Extension Coordinator- this person will seek grants, perform committee duties, and conduct training. Initially, financial resources will be used to fund part of the GIS TReC Director's salary representing a significant cost savings relative to hiring a full-time coordinator.
- SE Idaho RRC Technical Staff- this person(s) will develop and maintain geospatial metadata, web services, and web applications.
- Idaho State Tax Commission- This person(s) will provide parcel mapping support.
- Student graduate/undergraduate staff- students will be encouraged to become involved in the SE Idaho RRC through providing paid internship opportunities leveraging the existing geotechnologies internship program through ISU's GIS TReC.

Local Champions

Amongst the users listed for the SE Idaho GIS Users' Group is a good diversification of individuals and organizations that have been active in a wide range of not only data development but organizational development, software procurement and installation. The inclusion of ISU's GIS TReC is critical to the success of this effort. However, other local champions are also important, there are many other talented individuals throughout the area that have been innovate, foresighted, and generous with their knowledge of GIS.

Funding

Currently ISU's GIS TReC is tasked with many of the “outreach” aspects that the SE Idaho GIS Users' Group Regional Resource Center requires. Indeed, the GIS TReC has been fulfilling their mandate since 1998. However, increased dependence and the addition of specific accountable duties for the GIS TReC will require funding from other sources. Therefore, as state funds become available they should be used to support the SE Idaho RRC. Should the SE Idaho Users' Group decide to apply for a grant (e.g., CAP Grants), ISU's GIS TReC would act as the point of contact and administer the grant for the RRC.

Summary

In the best interest of the citizens of Idaho, it is important to recognize the substantial investment of resources (millions of dollars) that have already been expended at the GIS TReC and it is our intent to leverage these existing resources to guarantee the success of this RRC. Our region is diverse, it has a varying amount of technical knowledge, and a well distributed mix of existing GIS programs. While Idaho will always need to endure problems arising from its expansive geography, promoting the RRC for SE Idaho and using the GIS TReC as our “Home” will help develop a more cohesive region as well as afford savings to travel budgets.

It is our hope that the SE Idaho GIS Users' Group will be able to help facilitate the implementation of the ISDI and grow GIS throughout the area.