

January 16, 2009

RE: Building a National GIS – A Proposal for National Economic Recovery

On behalf of NatureServe, I am writing to express our support for building a National Geographic Information System (GIS). A GIS offers the power to integrate and visualize information so that it can be used in a consistent framework on many scales. The proposed National GIS (<http://www.gis.com/gisnation/>) would provide a public utility that integrates key digital maps for: Imagery, Parcels, Elevation, and Wildlife Habitat. Integrated via a GIS, this information would be available to speed decision making for national economic recovery projects that range from energy development to the creation of a “green” economy.

As envisioned, the National GIS is ready for immediate implementation by a coalition of state, federal, and private entities under the leadership of the Department of Interior. With \$1.2 billion in funding from Congress and the Administration, we are prepared to create an infrastructure with lasting value, dramatically improve the availability of key data, and to stimulate the creation of jobs with long-term potential to support more effective governance and economic growth.

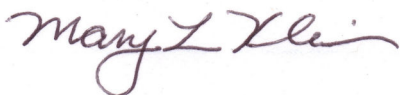
GIS is a fundamental tool for organizations like NatureServe and its network of 50 state natural heritage programs. NatureServe’s public/private partnership coordinates the most nationally consistent, high-quality data resource about wildlife and their habitats. Working together, we collect, map and analyze information on the location, conservation status, and trends affecting animals, plants, and ecosystems.

The result is credible, scientific information that reflects the needs of a dynamic and changing world to assist decision-makers in all sectors. For example, the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey and NatureServe have collaborated on the LANDFIRE initiative to classify and map habitats across the entire continental United States. This provides a crucial geospatial base layer used to assess the susceptibility of vegetation to wildfire—a layer that would gain broader use and impact if deployed through a National GIS.

The need for the National GIS is clear. Decision makers at all levels of government and business need to be able to respond on economic recovery projects quickly and monitor recovery results. The partnerships and organizational infrastructure for the proposed tasks is in place now, and work could begin immediately. We stand ready to assist in the creation of this critical component of the National GIS.

I urge you to support the proposal to build a National GIS. This initiative will not only provide the nation with a an indispensable scientific and economic information resource, but will create immediate green jobs and help to spur a sustainable economic recovery.

Sincerely,



Mary L. Klein
President and CEO