

# Montana Height Modernization Strategic Plan Meeting Report

February 6, 2009, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., at Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) headquarters, Helena, Montana. \*Phone-in conferencing provided by MDT.

## Participants

- \*      Celinda Adair, State of Montana DNRC
- \*      Tony Bachman, USFS
- Dave Davis, MDT
- Stu Kirkpatrick, DOA
- Bryce Larsen, MDT
- \*      Steve Niday, Missoula County
- \*      Gerald Pavlick, Morrison Maierle, Inc.
- \*      Curt Smith, NGS
- \*      Michael Sweet, University of Montana
- Bill Weber, MDT
- Rj Zimmer, DJ&A

## General Agenda

1. Projects Updates:
  - A. Montana Control Point Database (MTCPD)
    1. Current status – issued contract
    2. Adding photos to the database
  - B. Montana Height Modernization program (MTHMP) activities and update
2. Placing MTHMP under the Geodetic Control Working Group (GCWG) as a project
3. Finding a host/sponsor/home for the Geodetic Reference Center
4. NGS advisor funding for Montana
5. Meeting action items
6. Next meeting

## Reports

Link to the MDT Web site for Montana Height Modernization to access Executive Committee meeting minutes and other information: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/heightmod.shtml>.

### **1. Project Updates**

It was noted there are many common issues and similarities between the Montana Geodetic Control Working Group and the Montana Height Modernization Program Executive Committee, including membership, and a large part of this meeting was intended to determine if these two groups should coordinate meetings and work together.

#### **A. Montana Control Point Database (MTCPD)**

Stu Kirkpatrick and Rj Zimmer reported on the status of the MTCPD software development. An issued contract for a Contractor Engagement Proposal (CEP) was initially let in November with

replies returned in December. The 4 responses were scored in January with the winner being GCS Research of Missoula.

An initial kick-off meeting was held with GCS establishing a Project Charter and list of action items. The overall feeling was that GCS has a pretty good handle on the issues and their attitude was very positive. We should be able to evaluate a prototype program fairly soon. The first draft of this program as identified in the contract is scheduled for completion in September 2009.

The MTCPD is designed and intended to house all the geodetic survey control that is not in the NGS database. This survey control will be entered by Licensed Surveyors, registered in the system, in single point or spreadsheet format. The MTCPD will be comprised of a viewing component and a submission component and will include Geographic Coordinate Data Base (GCDB) data as well as yearly updates of NGS control.

At this time photographs of control points are not included in the contract but can be addressed in the future. An example of a geodetic survey control point from a similar survey control data base in Washington does include point photographs.

## **B. Montana Height Modernization Program (MTHMP) Update**

Bryce Larsen led the discussion on the direction and status of the MTHMP with this year's reduced funding of \$75,000 from the requested \$900,000. The MTHMP Executive Committee previously determined the reduced funds would be used to manage the MTHMP and develop the future plan and budget requests. With today's budgetary uncertainties, both federal and state, it's likely this year's grant award, which we have no idea of an amount at this time, will be much less than proposed in the five year plan.

It was determined by the Executive Committee that a modification to the current grant to enhance the use of the limited FY09 funds is necessary. It does not make sense to use the limited funds to develop a plan that will probably receive further limited funds for the program in the next year. It was decided to relegate a third of the remaining funds to MTHMP management and outreach and two-thirds to CORS installations.

Outreach was discussed as a very important part of our plan to help educate the public about the importance of accurate heights and to promote the height modernization plan for support and to identify other possible funding sources. Celinda Adair mentioned her agency regularly meets with constituents around the state addressing map modernization issues and the MTHMP could be included in the briefings. Another target for MTHMP briefings could be the Montana Association of Counties to help get the word out and stimulate interest and support at the county level. Target audiences and presentation materials need to address policy makers as well as technical personnel. We need to develop a standard marketing package including a MTHMP flier, short Executive Summary, 5 or 6 PowerPoint slides illustrating the MTHMP and identifying the benefits of a height modernization program as well as avenues to coordinate efforts in the development and use of accurate heights.

As part of the proposed outreach we addressed soliciting existing experts that could bring their knowledge regarding height modernization activities, benefits, and implementation to our Executive Committee as well as others through promoted sessions and workshops. Topics would include establishment and maintenance of state Reference Centers, state real time networks (RTN) using

CORS, and successful height modernization programs. Meetings with call-in potential, workshops, and Web based presentations were discussed as opportunities to help promote the program.

Bill Weber, MDT, has been working on evaluating Montana's existing and proposed CORS and is currently installing a CORS at the MDT headquarters in Helena. The information learned from the equipment purchase, site location plan, installation costs and equipment/IT setup will enable Bill to help plan future CORS development around the state. Bill's time spent on MTHMP activities is charged to the grant.

Michael Sweet reported on the status of the new CORS sponsored by the University of Montana to be sited at Ninemile Prairie. Mike also spoke to the complexity of the installation of a CORS and how every site and situation will have their own issues to deal with. He suggested identifying a loose panel of "experts" and contacts within the state that could help provide insight and direction for new CORS installations.

## **2. Placing MTHMP under the Geodetic Control Working Group (GCWG) as a Project**

The thinking behind combining the GCWG and MTHMP, possibly making the MTHMP a sub-committee of GCWG, was the two groups with very similar interests and many common goals also included many common voluntary members. Dave Davis pointed out the two working groups are dedicated to different things and the Executive Committee's decision was to keep the two groups separate but to hold joint meetings on a more regular basis. This decision supports easier scheduling, ensures regular meetings, and promotes outreach and increased awareness of both working groups.

As part of this discussion it was pointed out the e-mail distribution list should be streamlined to include common and combined membership. Several previous members included on the MTHMP distribution list have not participated in recent meetings and an option for removal from the distribution list shall be sent to all members. Those members wishing to discontinue their involvement are encouraged to seek other interested representatives to the working groups.

## **3. Finding a Host/Sponsor/Home for the Geodetic Reference Center**

If a Spatial (geodetic) Reference Center can be created for Montana who will be the host agency? Who will take on the administration, support and maintenance of the Reference Center and its data? Before we can answer these questions we need to determine what activities, products, and services will be administered by the Reference Center. We need to identify a list of functions, services, support personnel, and equipment that will be required. Then we need to list the minimum criteria required by a host and solicit proposals.

## **4. NGS Advisor Funding for Montana**

The NGS Geodetic Advisor program is contracted between NOAA and a state agency at about 50% of the Advisor's salary and expenses. Currently MDT funds 20% of the 50% to support the Advisor position in Montana and Idaho Transportation Department funds 80% of the 50%. This equates to about 10 work weeks of service in Montana each year. To increase the time spent by the Advisor in Montana, the NGS is looking for more money from the state. Curt Smith is currently negotiating with NGS looking to alternative solutions for increased time in Montana without increased funding as well as looking to other than MDT support to provide the increased funding required by NGS.

## **5. Meeting Action Items /Responsible party / Due date:**

- A. Update MTHMP Web page with current reports and standard outreach materials. / MDT / March 2.
- B. Update e-mail distribution list with those currently interested in participating in the GCWG and MTHMP and find additional interested partners or alternates. / Dave / March 2.
- C. Work with NGS to modify this year's grant to reflect the modified plan of increased outreach and construction of CORS. / Bryce / Soon to ensure proper use and direction of grant funds.
- D. Complete installation of the Helena CORS and identify costs and other issues. Compile map of existing/proposed CORS in the state and develop implementation plan. / Bill / Begin circulating to Committee for review.
- E. Identify list of responsibilities, functions, services and other requirements to solicit proposals to a host agency for the spatial Reference Center. Provide your list to Rj Zimmer who will collate with those gleaned from existing Reference Centers. A draft proposal is intended by the next meeting. / All (Zim will collate) / Input to Zim by March 19 (report at April 2 meeting).
- F. Contact existing Spatial Reference Centers, such as Washington, North Carolina, and Louisiana, to help determine responsibilities in support of action item E. above. / Mike, Curt / See E. above.
- G. Create standard outreach materials such as Executive Summary, two page MTHMP brochure, and 5 or 6 PowerPoint slides promoting the MTHMP. / Curt, Celinda / Begin circulating to Committee for review.
- H. Report on the status of the Control Point data base application. / Stu & Zim / April 2 meeting.

## **6. Next Meeting**

The next joint meeting of the GCWG and MTHMP is scheduled for April 2, 2009 at MDT headquarters, Helena – time to be determined.

Respectfully Submitted,

Curt Smith  
Chair, MTHMP Executive Committee