



RAMSEY COUNTY GIS USER GROUP

An alliance of communities sharing Geographical Information Systems

Meeting Minutes
2:00 – 4:00 PM, May 6, 2010
Shoreview City Hall, 4600 Victoria St N

1. Introductions

Carrie Mack, Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District
Mike Goodnature, Ramsey Conservation District
Carla Coates, Ramsey County
John Jacobson, Ramsey County
Matt Baker, City of Shoreview
Jim Bownik, City of Lauderdale
Jolinda Stapleton, City of Roseville
Melissa Baker, Capitol Region Watershed District
Joel Koepp, City of Roseville/City of North St Paul

The meeting was called to order by Carrie Mack, Chair of the User Group at 2:05 PM.

2. April 2010 minutes

The April 2010 meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

3. Paul Wickman, NorthStar Geographics: Integration of ESRI and Open Source Mapping Technology

Paul's firm is starting to develop applications that merge ESRI and open source technologies so customers do not have to choose one approach or the other. Each option still has its advantages—working with the City of Detroit Lakes on water resources applications, they found that open source options are still lacking the ability to do heavy scientific-type analysis.

ESRI's licensing schemes have been modified recently to be more permissive to sites that do not generate revenue, and are getting better at consuming open standards like WMS and other open data sources.

Paul showed the Firestats map tool, which client Fire Departments can use to visualize their incident reporting. The application uses an OpenLayers map window displaying basemap data from OpenStreetMap. There are checkbox layers for optional datasets crucial to fire response. It has a custom query form to search for and display the details of incidents (filtering by date, a user-defined map area, etc). The application runs using PHP and Javascript, with MapServer pulling the data out of a PostGIS database. Joel Koepp asked about the ease of configuration for MapServer. Paul said that tools like Quantum GIS and a couple of freely available ArcScripts allow users to export from a map in GIS directly to a MapServer text-based config file.

The next demo was an ESRI application for RMB Engineering that is used for lake and stream monitoring, as well as runoff and pollution measurement. The application uses ESRI's FLEX viewer (Flash-based technology) and consumes ESRI's pre-tiled national basemap for street data. Paul's firm is testing this application, with a planned release in October. For this application, they chose ESRI technology because it supports the tracing and analysis provided by ArcGIS Server's processing abilities.

Chair

Carrie Mack
carrie.mack@rwmwd.org

Vice Chair

Matt Baker
mbaker@shoreviewmn.gov

Secretary

Joel Koepp
joel.koepp@ci.roseville.mn.us



RAMSEY COUNTY GIS USER GROUP

An alliance of communities sharing Geographical Information Systems

Commercial software is more expensive, but easier to implement. Open source technology is free to acquire, but often requires lots of development time and delivers highly customized output.

Joel Koepp asked Paul to compare the user experience for the web applications he demonstrated to the ArcIMS-based application the User Group currently offers to the public. Paul said that the CivXplorer application is based on an outdated model, but works fine for what it does. Compared to his applications, it has a much more complex interface that can cause confusion for users. Joel expressed his frustration with ArcIMS because it doesn't support all the modern functionality like tiling, display annotation, seamless panning, and support for WMS layers. Paul said that the latest versions of ArcIMS may have limited support for some of those things, but that he'd have to investigate it to be sure.

Finally, Paul demonstrated an OpenLayers application that was consuming the Flex-based ArcGIS Server application in an embedded window and had querying tools that would deliver data from each application in a single display pane.

4. Hiring of Ramsey County GIS Manager

Carla Coates announced that Ramsey County has filled the GIS Manager position. They have hired Matt Kuokol from MnDOT, and he will be starting on May 17. The position will report directly to IT Director Mary Mahoney. Matt worked in MnDOT's Information Services division and has experience as a developer.

Joel and Carrie said they would make sure that Matt gets invited to the June User Group meeting.

5. Ramsey County Updates: Carla Coates

Carla reported that the output of the County's new GRM tax system is going well. A new road edge polygon layer from the physical feature update has been put on the FTP site for group members to download.

Joel Koepp noted some issues with taxpayer names that he had spotted while working on a mailing. John Jacobson asked members to contact him with any errors they notice in the tax data. He said they are getting the most complaints from residents about the taxpayer name issues, but it's due to a script that GRM produced that was to be used for all 20 counties that did the conversion to the new system. They have had a private database contractor in to fix a lot of things for the GIS extract.

Joel mentioned that there had briefly been an issue with the taxpayer name field being in mixed case, which doesn't work for ArcIMS queries because they need to be in all capitals. Chris Ulrich at Ramsey County has fixed this issue in the GIS extract going forward. Jolinda Stapleton noted that the lake polygons in the new physical features update have changed quite a bit from the 2006 data. Carla added that the field names (e.g., DXF_LYR) in the attributes may have changed, so anyone using definition queries should check to see that they are still working.

John Jacobson said there appeared to be no interest from other Ramsey County departments in funding the web-based Pictometry system. They are hesitant about the cost of the option for importing GIS layers, and unsure about the ability to update them. Jolinda Stapleton suggested that the User Group could do a public safety oriented Pictometry session to try and drum up interest.

Chair

Carrie Mack

carrie.mack@rwmwd.org

Vice Chair

Matt Baker

mbaker@shoreviewmn.gov

Secretary

Joel Koepp

joel.koepp@ci.roseville.mn.us



RAMSEY COUNTY GIS USER GROUP

An alliance of communities sharing Geographical Information Systems

Carla noted that the 1991 historical imagery digitization project is moving forward. The film has been delivered to the firm in Canada, but they have not yet received the check from the County.

6. Community Announcements

Carrie Mack reminded everyone that the User Group's Joint Powers Agreement with Ramsey County is expiring at the end of 2010, so a new one needs to get reviewed by an attorney and needs to have the effective dates of the agreement included in the language. She is also working on a chart of all the online mapping applications that the User Group has looked at so far so the group can do comparisons. This chart will be shared with the new Ramsey County GIS Manager.

Joel Koepp quickly mentioned that Roseville's address data has been published on the MetroGIS Datafinder site as part of the metro-wide address points pilot project. Roseville is the first community to contribute actual data.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:31 PM.

Minutes submitted by Joel Koepp, Secretary

Chair

Carrie Mack
carrie.mack@rwmwd.org

Vice Chair

Matt Baker
mbaker@shoreviewmn.gov

Secretary

Joel Koepp
joel.koepp@ci.roseville.mn.us