

Conference Call: NYS GIS Association Regional Coordination Committee

Wednesday, March 29th, Noon – 1:15pm

Attendees

Paula Cutrone: Central New York Regional GIS (CNYRGIS)
Ross Baldwin: Long Island GIS (LIGIS)
Doug Schuetz: Lower Hudson Valley GIS/Rockland County GIS
Dave Smith (for Star Carter): DANC/Adirondacks
Heather Weller: Southeast Adirondacks/LAGIS
William Ostrander: Southern Tier GIS (SYNERGIS)
Eric Montz (for James Jones): Western NY GIS (WNYGIS)
Alan Leidner: NYC GISMO

Regional Updates

Alan Leidner, NYC GISMO: Membership in GISMO is hovering between 250 and 275. At least half of GISMO members are students from schools like Hunter, NYU, Columbia and Pratt. GISMO membership dues are \$20 annually and includes \$10 for NYS GIS Association membership. Student membership is free and GISMO pays State Association dues for all its student members. GISMO is in the process of organizing an Environmental Professional Affiliation group headed by Joyce Cytryn and Stephen Metz. This group could eventually extend Statewide if upstate leadership can be identified. GISMO expects to be holding a student jobs fair later in the Spring which is being organized by Amy Jeu and Lisa Palmer both GISMO Board members. On April 4th GISMO will hold a membership meeting at the Fund for the City of New York (121 6th Avenue). Talks will include brief presentations of work of the Center for Geospatial Innovation by Alan Leidner (Emerging GIS), Wendy Dorf (Underground Infrastructure Data Integration), and Noreen Whysel (9/11 GIS Archive and NYC COGITO – Coalition of Geospatial Information and Technology Organizations).

Paula Cutrone, CNYRGIS: Central NY Regional GIS is a new regional group encompassing the counties that surround the City of Syracuse including Onondaga, Madison, Oneida and Oswego. The group was officially resurrected in September 2016 and now includes about 33 members. CNYRGIS has organized a number of after work get togethers that they call “Mappy Hours,” a phrase used by the SynerGIS group in Ithaca (Everyone on the call thought that title was cool) They are also looking to set up day time meetings as well.

Ross Baldwin, LIGIS: LIGIS holds four meetings annually and the next one is coming up on April 26th. Their membership meetings are held on the campus of Stony Brook University and are attended by an average of 125 members. Ross announced that LIGIS is growing in Nassau County and currently two of LIGIS’ Board Members are from Nassau. LIGIS also continues to grow in Suffolk County. LIGIS is focusing on increasing GIS education in the public school system. They are also looking to put out more information about GIS to Long Island local government officials.

Doug Schuetz, Lower Hudson Valley GIS/Rockland County: Doug reports that there have been recent meetings among the GIS Directors of Hudson Valley counties including Rockland, Westchester, Ulster, and Orange. There may be interest in these counties banding together to form a Hudson Valley regional

group. Currently, individual counties have representation on the Regional Committee. Hudson Valley meetings have focused on State and County efforts to develop a parcel data base. There have also been discussions about the closing of Indian Point.

Dave Smith (for Star Carter), DANC: DANC will participate with the Legislative Committee of the NYS GIS Association, to help inform the NY State Legislature about GIS on May 9th. DANC is also organizing a map day event at Clarkson University. DANC is working to expand its services in Lewis County and Franklyn County.

Heather Weller, Southeast Adirondacks (LAGIS): LAGIS, covers counties including Saratoga, Washington and Warren. They have not been very active over the past few years although they recently held a social hour in Saratoga. Various suggestions made included: Organize a regional list serve and stay in touch via email; get together at the upcoming GeoCon in Lake Placid – perhaps reserve a table for a breakfast meeting; encourage Professor Alex Chaucer and Skidmore students to form a regional GIS hub.

William Ostrander, Southern Tier (SNYERGIS): Will hold a meeting tomorrow (Thursday) with speakers from Esri who will be discussing ArcGIS Online. In the past year, the group met in Chemung County with an Esri speaker. STGUG also met with the Ithaca Group (SYNERGIS) to discuss alternative online GIS software options. Another meeting was in Owego, Tioga County where members shared their various methods of storing GIS data.

Eric Montz (for James Jones), Western NY GIS (WNYGIS): Has been holding four events each year with good turnouts. They have about 250 people on their email list, with fifty being actual paying members who via dues are also members of the NYS GIS Association. Many of their get togethers have a social rather than a technical focus including a “Jingle Mingle” and an outing to a battle cruiser docked in Buffalo harbor. The group works closely with Buffalo State College and has ties with the University of Buffalo. WNYGIS works to actively engage college students but acknowledges the difficulty of students without cars making it to meetings. Eric reports a continuing concern about managing money while not being an incorporated entity. WNYGIS is starting to see some revenue from its events but feels uncomfortable handling the money themselves. Reaching out to Christa, NYSGISA Treasurer was suggested. Alan Leidner reported that Christa handles all GISMO financial matters and cuts checks whenever requested.

General Discussion: How can we encourage the growth of GIS?

- Paula Cutrone thinks that there were not a lot of webinars scheduled in the past which might have deterred people from joining. There have been more webinars scheduled this year and she thinks this will help draw in more members. There is a printable document on the NYSGISA website that regional groups could distribute to their members.
<http://nysgis.net/Docs/NYSGISAssociationMemberROI.pdf>
- Ross Baldwin thought we needed to do more to educate local public officials about GIS perhaps in the form of a handout. Not sure that the materials posted to the Emerging GIS page, including GISCalc, were getting through to local leaders without a GIS background. Ross would like additional webinars, especially those that would appeal to students, about the latest geo-technologies. He thought that the Association needed to break down silos and find better ways of sharing webinars and other kinds of material generated at the Regional level.

- Doug Schuetz notes that Rockland County has a total population of about 320,000 people but very few GIS professionals working for County government and the County's local governments. Never-the-less, Rockland has many effective GIS applications. On the other hand, Rockland has many workers who use GIS applications for their day to day work. He wonders whether a strategy could be devised for GIS users (vs GIS Pros) to be drawn towards the Association. He thought the Association should consider webinars geared specifically for GIS users, to help them understand the technology and science underlying the spatial tools they use: perhaps a series of GIS 101 teaching modules. Doug felt there needed to be more info exchanged about practical applications being developed and implemented across the State.
- Dave Smith agreed with Doug S. There are many more GIS users than GIS professionals and we should find a way to reach them. Feels we should also be doing more outreach to students. Suggested Instagram as a way to promote information to the large number of people we might want to reach. For example: video snippets of meeting sessions and webinars could be sent out. GIS applications could be featured. DANC has been working with the agricultural sector – and info about “food hubs” could be broadcast. Other sectors could be targeted as well. In addition, a section of the Association's website could be devoted to non-pro GIS issues and interests.
- Heather Weller picked up on the Instagram idea. She thought that through the use of Instagram “take overs” different groups within the Association could take responsibility for content for short periods of time and then pass it on to another.
- Paula Cutrone, who is the Co-Chair of the Association's Communications Committee, said that we don't have an Instagram account and she would bring it up.
- Heather agreed with Doug's thought about recording local meetings and presentations and sharing them. She thought we should be using film much more.
- Bill Ostrander felt we should be doing more outreach to other groups that could use GIS tools – which might include re-establishing a speakers bureau. (Chair's note: NYC GISMO's new Environmental PAG is thinking of reaching out to all the environmental groups in the NYC Metro Area to identify geospatial needs with the thought of finding ways to provide services.) He mentioned groups associated with history, real property, and public works. Our regional groups could identify projects already done in other sectors and identify speakers to present these ideas at statewide meetings held by other sectors. Bill also agrees that we should develop a PR piece about the Association to be handed out at meetings we attend and speak at.
- Eric Montz believed we needed to show what members were getting for their dues – even if membership costs are very low. He agreed that we should be using social media and video more effectively. He recommended a quarterly newsletter or e-magazine. He also felt that we were not doing enough to attract private sector workers who use GIS (surveyors, engineers, planners, emergency workers, etc.) who may feel left out in the cold. He asked whether we really knew what was important to them. He mentioned how difficult it was to get State geodata and how useful that could be for private sector GIS users (public sector too!). There was then a brief discussion about the State's ShareGIS project and its potential to make easy-to-access open state data available to all. There have been some preliminary discussions between Association leaders and State GIO Frank Winters on this topic.

Alan Leidner note: I found the discussion above very enlightening. The Association tries hard in many ways to communicate, and to develop products that will be useful to GIS users and professionals. But it

seems like a lot of this excellent material is confined to our website and is not pushed out to members and those on our list serve. Most everyone on the call was intrigued by how Instagram might be used to promote GIS and the Association, and draw both members and non-members closer. In a broader sense, it could be that we need a more strategic public relations and communications strategy that focuses as much on the user of GIS products as on the GIS professionals who create those products. I recommend that the Association's Board discuss this and other suggestions that emerged during this call.