The National Needs The National Map

Governments depend on a common set of geographic base information as a tool for economic and community development, land and natural resource management, and health and safety services. Emergency management and defense operations rely on this information. Private industry, nongovernmental organizations, and individual citizens use the same geographic data. Geographic information underpins an increasingly large part of the Nation's economy.

Available geographic data often have the following problems:

- They do not align with each other because layers are frequently created or revised separately,
- They do not match across administrative boundaries because each producing organization uses different methods and standards, and
- They are not up to date because of the complexity and cost of revision.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is developing The National Map to be a seamless, continuously maintained, and nationally consistent set of online, public domain, geographic base information to address these issues. The National Map will serve as a foundation for integrating, sharing, and using other data easily and consistently.

The USGS has significant research programs in the Lake Tahoe area that also depend on the availability of core geographic information. Ongoing projects include decision support-system studies and an assessment of the impacts of urban growth and land use change. Core base-map data, such as imagery and elevation, are required input to these studies. In the past, research data needs were addressed on an individual basis. By aligning research and other needs with The National Map vision, we will progress from duplicative, single-purpose data acquisitions toward true multiuser, multipurpose shared assets.

The Lake Tahoe Area Pilot Project

Several local, regional, and utility agencies in the Lake Tahoe area use and produce geographic information to accomplish their work. However, their individual missions do not include responsibility for making all of the region's datasets compatible, offering them publicly online, and maintaining them in relation to one another. The agencies are seeking a mechanism for making their data more accessible and useful as well as acquiring new data where there are gaps.

The Lake Tahoe Area Pilot Project will build upon the President's 1997 executive order that established a formal interagency partnership charged with ensuring coordination and efficient management of Federal projects and activities within the Lake Tahoe Basin. Under this initiative, the Lake Tahoe Data Clearinghouse was developed to provide access to USGS geographic data.
More Information About The Lake Tahoe Area Pilot Project

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More Information About The National Map

We welcome your comments on The National Map mission and strategies. You can view and download the full report at nationalmap.usgs.gov. Please share your thoughts about the vision with the USGS by e-mail at nationalmap@usgs.gov or by mail to USGS-National Map, MS 511 National Center, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, VA 20192.

Next Steps

The USGS is connecting with Lake Tahoe area agencies to discover and document existing datasets that may serve as input to the pilot. Other steps include integrating the diverse data sources and building an online map server that will be available to the general public. Lessons learned in developing the system will be applied to the implementation of The National Map nationwide.