

The 3D Elevation Program—Summary for Maine

Introduction

Elevation data are essential to a broad range of applications, including forest resources management, wildlife and habitat management, national security, recreation, and many others. For the State of Maine, elevation data are critical for natural resources conservation, flood risk management, forest resources management, agriculture and precision farming, coastal zone management, and other business uses. Today, high-density light detection and ranging (lidar) data are the primary sources for deriving elevation models and other datasets. Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies work in partnership to (1) replace data that are older and of lower quality and (2) provide coverage where publicly accessible data do not exist. A joint goal of State and Federal partners is to acquire consistent, statewide coverage to support existing and emerging applications enabled by lidar data.

The National Enhanced Elevation Assessment (NEEA; Dewberry, 2011) evaluated multiple elevation data acquisition options to determine the optimal data quality and data replacement cycle relative to cost to meet the identified requirements of the user community. The evaluation demonstrated that lidar acquisition at quality level 2 (table 1) for the conterminous United States and quality level 5 ifsar data (table 1) for Alaska with a 6- to 10-year acquisition cycle provided the highest benefit/cost ratios. The 3D Elevation Program (3DEP) initiative (Snyder, 2012a,b) selected an 8-year acquisition cycle for the respective quality levels. 3DEP, managed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Office of Management and Budget Circular

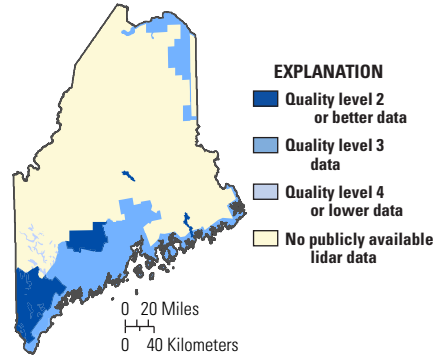


Figure 1. Map of Maine showing the extent of existing and planned publicly available lidar data. Information source: United States Interagency Elevation Inventory, August 2013, updated annually. Quality level 2 or better data meet 3DEP requirements. See table 1 for quality level information.

A-16 lead agency for terrestrial elevation data, responds to the growing need for high-quality topographic data and a wide range of other 3D representations of the Nation’s natural and constructed features.

3D Elevation Program Benefits for Maine

The top 10 Maine business uses for 3D elevation data, which are based on the estimated annual conservative benefits of the 3DEP initiative, are shown in table 2. The NEEA survey respondents in the State of Maine estimated that the national 3DEP initiative would result in at least \$4.7 million in new benefits annually to the State. The cost for such a program in Maine is approximately \$11 million, resulting in a payback period of 2.3 years and a benefit/cost ratio of 3.5 to 1 over an 8-year period. Recently, Maine officials reported substantial (up to 20 percent) reductions in the cost for lidar data acquisition, which could reduce total costs and the payback period. Because monetary estimates were not provided for all reported benefits, the total benefits of the 3DEP to Maine are likely much higher. On the basis of the NEEA survey results, all levels of government and many organizations in Maine could benefit from access to statewide high-resolution elevation data.

3D Elevation Program

3DEP is a national program managed by the USGS to acquire high-resolution elevation data. The initiative is backed by a comprehensive assessment of requirements (Dewberry, 2011) and is in the early stages of implementation. 3DEP will improve data accuracy and provide more current data than is available in the National Elevation Dataset (NED). The goal of this high-priority cooperative program is to be operational by January 2015, and to have complete coverage of the United States by the end of 2022, depending on funding and partnerships. 3DEP can conservatively provide new benefits of \$1.2 billion/year and has the potential to generate \$13 billion/year in new benefits through improved government services, reductions in crop and homeowner losses resulting from floods, more efficient routing of vehicles, and a host of other government, corporate, and citizen activities (Dewberry, 2011). A shared, common elevation dataset would foster cooperation and improve decision-making among all levels of government and other stakeholders.

Benefits of a Funded National Program

- Economy of scale—Acquisition of data covering larger areas reduces costs by 25 percent.
- A systematic plan—Acquisition of data at a higher quality level reduces the cost of “buying up” to the highest levels needed by State and local governments.
- Higher quality data and national coverage—Ensure consistency for applications that span State and watershed boundaries and meet more needs, which results in increased benefits to citizens.
- Increase in Federal agency contributions—Reduces State and local partner contributions.
- Acquisition assistance—Provided through readily available contracts and published acquisition specifications.

3DEP in Maine by the Numbers

Expected annual benefits	\$4.73 million
Estimated total cost	\$10.85 million
Payback	2.3 years
Quality level 1 buy-up estimate	\$6.90 million

For Maine, approximately 68 percent of the identified annual benefits will be met by the natural resources conservation and flood risk management business use requirements, as shown in table 2. The status of publicly available lidar data in Maine is shown in figure 1. By enhancing coordination between 3DEP and various government and private organizations in Maine, it may be possible to realize more than the cited conservative benefits and attain the higher potential benefits for many business uses.

The following examples of how 3DEP data can support business uses in Maine are based on the NEEA interviews and surveys: (1) More accurate elevation data can improve the delineation of watersheds and their drainage networks, including detailed delineations of small watersheds in urban areas, which aids stormwater management. The State is currently realizing benefits for small areas where lidar data are available; with the availability of additional data, the geographic benefits would be expanded. (2) More accurate statewide elevation data would reduce onsite data-collection costs and the amount of time required to complete some phases of flood-risk and

floodplain management projects (fig. 2). The quality of analyses and study results would improve as a result of the more accurate elevation data, and as project completion times and costs are reduced, the savings could be applied to other priority projects.

References Cited

- Dewberry, 2011, Final report of the National Enhanced Elevation Assessment (revised 2012): Fairfax, Va., Dewberry, 84 p. plus appendixes, <http://www.dewberry.com/Consultants/GeospatialMapping/FinalReport-NationalEnhancedElevationAssessment>.
- Snyder, G.I., 2012a, National Enhanced Elevation Assessment at a glance: U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet 2012-3088, 2 p., <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2012/3088/>.
- Snyder, G.I., 2012b, The 3D Elevation Program—Summary of program direction: U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet 2012-3089, 2 p., <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2012/3089/>.



Figure 2. Flooding in Fort Kent, Maine, on May 1, 2008. The Maine Floodplain Management Program works with individuals, communities, and floodplain management professionals to reduce the risk of flooding. Photograph from Floodplain Management Program, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

Table 2. Conservative benefits estimates for the top 10 business uses of the proposed 3DEP data identified in the National Enhanced Elevation Assessment for Maine (Dewberry, 2011).

Rank	Business use	Annual benefits (millions)
1	Natural resources conservation	\$1.69
2	Flood risk management	1.51
3	Forest resources management	0.33
4	Agriculture and precision farming	0.29
5	Coastal zone management	0.26
6	Sea level rise and subsidence	0.25
7	Infrastructure and construction management	0.19
8	Geologic resource assessment and hazard mitigation	0.13
9	Aviation navigation and safety	0.06
10	Wildfire management, planning, and response	0.01
	Other	0.01
	Total	4.73

3D Elevation Program—Continued

The USGS and its partners will acquire quality level 2 or better (table 1) 3D lidar data over the conterminous United States, Hawaii, and the U.S. territories. Interferometric synthetic aperture radar (ifsar) data are being collected at quality level 5 (table 1) in Alaska. The data will be acquired over an 8-year period and will be made available to the public. By using this acquisition scenario, a number of high-quality elevation-data products can be created to serve a wide range of business uses in government and the private sector.

Table 1. Data quality levels used in the National Enhanced Elevation Assessment (Dewberry, 2011).

[≤, less than or equal to]

Quality level	Nominal pulse spacing (meters)	Vertical accuracy (centimeters)
1	0.35	9.25
2	0.7	9.25
3	1–2	≤18.5
4	5	46–139
5	5	93–185

Next Steps for Implementing 3DEP

Accomplishing the 3DEP initiative's goal of national coverage in 8 years depends on the following factors:

- Increased partnerships among Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments.
- Partnerships that acquire elevation data to the program's specifications across larger project areas.
- Increased communication about and awareness of the program's benefits and goals.
- Support for the program from government and other stakeholders.

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