



GIS technology is increasingly being used by state and local governments across the United States, but communities are recording similar information at different scales or recording completely different information. These inconsistencies can make sharing and merging data for regional statewide planning difficult. National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) with support from American Park and Recreation Society (APRS) and National Society for Park Resources (NSPR) Branches are working to develop a set of attributes, values and data transfer standards for parks, trails and recreation facilities for use with non-federal resources. Attributes are types of information about a resource; for example park size or park type. Values are predefined responses for an attribute or instructions on how the attribute should be reported; for example, park size being reported in acres versus square feet. The overarching purpose of this project is to have local governments collect a basic set of information consistently in their GIS systems that will allow for better local, regional and statewide management and planning of park and recreation resources.

NRPA is not collecting data during this phase of the project. However we are taking into consideration a variety of implications that a consistent system of descriptive attributes about parks, trails and recreation facilities may have. These implications include, but are not limited to, (1) a basic set of consistent information being captured for all non-federal public park and recreation resources in the US; (2) considering factors related to management, accessibility, sustainable/green infrastructure, homeland security, etc; (3) improved ability to compare agencies due to data consistency; (4) improved ability to compare and aggregate information across levels of government; (5) state inventory requirement for Land and Water Conservation Fund state-side funding; (6) creation of a Land and Water Conservation Fund Legacy Resource and (7) contribution to national or international online atlas of protected areas.

Project Goals:

- Review attributes and values of the proposed Federal Trail Data Content and Data Transfer Standards to create a set of data content attributes and values appropriate for local government
- Develop data content attributes and values for parks
- Develop data content attributes and values for recreation structures & facilities (for example, community centers, community theaters, athletic structures, etc)
- Develop a revised data model for trails and new data models for parks and recreation structures
- Complete a demonstration project that applies the defined criteria and attributes in a region that has state, county and local government parks, recreation structures and trails.

Project Deliverables:

- Basic set of attributes and values for parks, recreation structures & facilities, and trails provided in an easy to understand and use format.
- Downloadable Data Model that can be imported into a variety of GIS systems and a flat file model for communities without access to GIS resources or for data collection.
- Demonstration Project & Beta Test Period– a multi-government project where the data model, attributes and values would be applied and tested.
- Advanced practices providing case studies and examples of using GIS in management, operations and customer service applications.

Where are we now?

The processes to develop the standard and associated reviews are meant to be broad and inclusive of disciplines beyond park and recreation management and NRPA's membership. An advisory committee comprised of members, allied organizations and stakeholders has been selected to guide this project and facilitate a broad national review. A task force has been utilized to develop the criteria, attributes and values. Collectively, these two groups have members representing state, county, special district and local governments, American Planning Association, American Society of Landscape Architects, National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers, National Association of Recreation Resource Planners, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, National Park Service (LWCF office) and NRPA's state affiliates. As of June 12, the final draft of attributes and values for parks, trails and recreation facilities have been reviewed and comments received. We have also selected a vendor for the Data Model and have begun work on that portion of the deliverables.

What's next?

A beta test period for the Data Model is scheduled for September and October 2009 that will allow agencies to utilize the model and provide feedback. Concurrently, NRPA will be collecting advanced practices in order to produce a case studies and practices report related to the use of park and recreation GIS data in management, operations or customer service applications. Anticipated release of the final deliverables is January 2010.

For More Information:

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