

## **What is included in your dream?**

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In the September 2011 issue of [Benchmarks](#) (see url at end of article) I asked how we might improve the future for Surveying in New Mexico. The follow up question is “What is included in your dream?” As many of you know, I am better at asking questions than coming up with answers. One reason is that answers are developed by many persons in response to specific challenges and challenges are derived from visions (often of the impossible). I submit that the best visions are those developed through discussion and consensus. In our case – what is the best case scenario for surveyors practicing in New Mexico? So, I’ll ask again. With regard to surveying, what is your dream and what does it take to make your dream a reality?

I am reminded of a line in one of Sandra Bullock’s movies, Miss Congeniality, where as a beauty contestant she is asked, “What is the one most important thing our society needs?” As an undercover law enforcement professional, Bullock deadpans in responding, “That would be harsher punishment for parole violators.” There is no reaction from the audience and after a short awkward silence, Bullock gushes, “and World Peace.” The audience instantly responds with enthusiastic applause. Hopefully we can come up with a better vision for the surveying profession than “world peace.” Although I rather like the specificity of the “parole violators” answer I readily concede that we need to acknowledge the expectations of our audience and proceed from there.

I believe that, while a case can be made for each answer, “world peace” and “parole violators” are at different places on a scale deserving consideration. The dreams/challenges listed in the following paragraphs may be unrealistic in that they fall closer to “world peace” on the scale. While that may be a good place to start, we need to be more pragmatic as we look for ways to address those lofty challenges. We need to concentrate on specific “parole violator” items that contribute to “world peace.” Articulating lofty goals may give us a warm fuzzy feeling, but the “imposing harsher punishment for parole violators” approach will require considerable debate/discussion and significant effort to actually realize those goals. That calls to mind John Kennedy’s inaugural address in which he challenged, “Ask not what your county can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.”

My dream for the surveying profession in New Mexico is that, collectively, we will realize the opportunity to work on the same page with regard to both horizontal and vertical (that’s 3-D) survey data. Although one can say that the technology, the models, the equipment, and the software are all available, we still face challenges as various combinations of knowledge, commitment, specifications, money, and time are all identified as being in short supply when it comes to doing the best job possible for our clients (and the public). OK, that is a “world peace” kind of dream. What are some “parole violator” aspirations that we can pursue to move in that direction? Among many possibilities, I give one example.

I believe that the citizens of New Mexico and the surveying profession can both benefit from better use of existing talent and resources. We currently have too many “silos” of activity in which cards are held close. That may be fine for poker and certain classes of surveying but,

among others, I am also looking for a way to improve the minimum standards for control surveying. In the September 2011 issue of [Benchmarks](#) (see url below) I attempted to provide information on various alternatives for basic survey control being implemented in other places. Briefly, several alternatives are summarized as:

- Develop a state agency having responsibility for spatial data use and applications from the top down for all users – North Carolina, South Carolina, and Missouri are examples.
- Include an office of “state surveyor” in an existing agency such as Nebraska has or as proposed by Thurow/King for New Mexico. Is it possible we have a head start in this category by building on efforts coming out of the New Mexico Geographic Advisory Council?
- Using state/local initiatives (and possible assistance of programs such as Height Modernization), develop a state-wide GNSS network capable of supporting a myriad users and applications throughout the state. Examples include Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Washington, and others.
- City/county/regional implementation could also be developed as an alternative such as already established in Albuquerque or as being developed in Las Cruces and other places.
- Development of private GNSS networks such as established by vendors (for example, Leica, Topcon, and Trimble) and entrepreneurs.

The September 2011 article was written primarily to address the planning effort currently being pursued in Southern New Mexico. There are a number of “world peace” issues identified in that plan but the plan also focuses on “parole violators” issues. I am encouraged that development and use of the “spatial data infrastructure” has been introduced to the planning committee and hope that coordination of local efforts and accountability as envisioned in the plan for other issues can be realized for spatial data applications as well.

But I am worried that the current planning effort will pay few dividends for the surveying profession if we, NMPS and the profession, fail to articulate our vision for what could and should be implemented with regard to development of a comprehensive spatial data infrastructure for Southern New Mexico and/or the entire state.

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