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FEDERAL INFORMATION MANAGERS ENCOURAGED BY SPATIAL DATA ORDER

The Executive Order signed recently by President Clinton to develop the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI), will help coordinate the collection of geospatial data by government agencies and make it more accessible to users, according to the Federal group responsible for the mapping lane of the information highway.

"With this order, the President is requiring Federal agencies to be more cost-effective and efficient in managing spatial information. The NSDI will provide an umbrella for Federal, state, and local government agencies and the private sector to cooperatively develop and share geospatial data, including transportation and hydrologic networks, elevation, administrative boundaries, soils, geology, land cover, and socioeconomic information," Nancy Tosta, Executive Secretary of the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) said.

"Among other things, this will translate into improvements in our ability to manage natural resources, to plan our communities and to monitor the environment," Tosta said. "The goal is for everyone to have access to higher quality, more current data for decision-making on issues ranging from biodiversity to emergency response."

The Executive Order signed April 11, 1994, charged the FGDC, chaired by Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, with coordinating Federal agency efforts to develop the NSDI. Specifically, the Executive order directs the FGDC to:

- o Involve all levels of government and the private sector in developing the NSDI and identify strategies for sharing the costs of data collection.
- o Develop a plan for completing a national digital geospatial data framework for the nation, as a foundation for other data collection activities.
- o Establish a National Geospatial Data Clearinghouse to facilitate finding and retrieving geospatial data.
- o Identify, develop, and promote the use of standards needed to make data sharing easier.

"This Executive Order gives us the opportunity to change the way data providing and data using organizations do business," Tosta observed. "All citizens should benefit as the increased availability of geographic information leads to better decisions at all levels of government."

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(Note to Editors: Copies of the Executive Order and additional information on the FGDC are available from the FGDC General Secretariat, 703-648-5725.)