

March 15, 2018  
The Honorable Mike Crapo  
239 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC, 20510

RE: Support for Senate Bill 2128: Geospatial Data Act of 2017

Dear Senator Crapo:

The Idaho Geospatial Council, which consists of 190 Geographic Information System (GIS) professionals from all corners of Idaho and includes members from federal, state, local, and tribal governments, public utilities, and private industry, provides this letter to you in support of Senate Bill 2128, the Geospatial Data Act of 2017, which is currently being reviewed in the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

We strongly support this proposed legislation as it will help federal and other agencies become more spatially responsible and improve efficiencies by establishing clear data standards and sharing guidelines. As more and more people, professionals and non-professional alike, share geospatial data to the internet, it has never been more important for authoritative GIS datasets to be easily discoverable and accessible. Access to free, public, and high quality spatial data by public and private agencies will avoid duplication and result in better decision making, while strict data standards will make it easier for agencies to collaborate in GIS data production.

Facilitating the implementation of the National Geospatial Data Asset (NGDA) data themes and acquisition of associated geospatial data will greatly enhance the ability of federal and non-federal entities to not only satisfy their individual missions, but will also provide them with common/standard datasets with which to work. Universal datasets allow for different agencies and companies to create easily repeatable methods and talk the same talk, so to speak.

GIS is an important technology for Idaho, with hundreds of GIS professionals working across our State. The following are just two of many examples that highlight the benefit of timely, accurate and standardized GIS data:

- In response to Idaho's extended fire seasons and consequent fire footprints, researchers at NASA in collaboration with Idaho State University and Boise State University, have developed the NASA Rehabilitation Convergence for Ecosystem Recovery (RECOVER) system which is a

rapid response GIS application that quickly provides land managers with the spatial information they need to make decisions for the rehabilitation of those burned areas. A study looking at the success of the RECOVER application shows that it provided crucial information to land managers to either alter or validate their decisions on over \$1.2 million worth of post-fire treatments, and saved nearly 800 hours of staff time by streamlining data collection as well as communication with local stakeholders and partnering agencies. It is easy to see how the availability of freely shared standardized data contributed to those efforts and benefits. <sup>1</sup>

- Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of Idaho’s economy and GIS helps support this industry. A 2014 study by the USGS<sup>2</sup> discusses the benefits of freely available Landsat imagery and other GIS data used in a variety of GIS applications that support agriculture. To ensure that Idaho’s water laws, which are based on the “first in time, first in right” doctrine, are properly applied, hydrologists rely on Landsat and other GIS data to estimate evapotranspiration, which is the consumptive amount of water used by a crop. In addition, Landsat based evapotranspiration data also helps hydrologists estimate water depletions from the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer which is essential for planning and managing our water resources in Idaho so that agriculture will continue to have access to water in the future.

For those reasons, we hope that you will support Senate Bill 2128.

Sincerely,

Bill Farnsworth  
Idaho Geospatial Information Officer

Wilma Robertson,  
Chair, Idaho Geospatial Council-Executive Committee

<sup>1</sup> Toombs, William, et al. “Evaluating the socioeconomic impacts of rapid assembly and deployment of geospatial data in wildfire emergency response planning: A case study using the NASA RECOVER decision support system (DSS).”

<sup>2</sup> Serbina, Larisa, and Miller, H.M, 2014, Landsat uses and benefits—Case studies by application area: U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 2014–1108, 61 p., <http://dx.doi.org/10.3133/ofr20141108/>.