

# **The Mississippi Coordinating Council for Remote Sensing and Geographical Information Systems (GIS Council)**

## **Draft Minutes**

**April 14, 2025**

Next Meeting Date: Monday, July 22nd, 2025 (Time 10:30 AM, Location TBD)

Council Members Present: Steve Gray (MS Association of Supervisors) Jim Steil (IHL-MARIS), David Dockery (MDEQ), Blake Pickering (MS Assessors and Collectors Association), Rebecca Powell (MDA), Sean Hodges (MFC), Scott Trapolino (MML- City of Olive Branch), Evan Wright (MDOT), Kristyn Gunter (SMPDD), Preston White (MEMA), Wayne Williams (MS Board of Registered Professional Geologists)

Council Members Absent: Steve Patterson (ITS), Mike Love (MS Association of Surveyors), Kelle Barfield (Supervisor District 5 Warren County), Bill Cheney (Secretary of State), Shari Veazey (MML),

Other Attendees: Wyatt Dunn (AG Liaison), Haley Feather (NSGIC-MS811), Nathan Brownstein MS Oil & Gas Board) Will Grayson (MDOT) Ethan Adkins (MEMA), Charlie Dexter (Lee County 911), Melissa Bryant (Rankin County 911), Paul Harkins (Lee County 911), Lillian Victory (MDEQ), Toby Sanford (GTPDD), Karen Henderson (Geo Jobe), Lacinda Jaynes (MSAIC), Leslie Rakestraw City of Oxford, Carl Zitta (Oktibbeha County CTO)

- 1) Welcome and Introductions** – Steve Gray requests everyone register on the Mississippi Public Notice website as the new official notification system for Council announcements.
- 2) Approval of Draft Minutes** Postponed for review
- 3) SB2835 / Mississippi Emergency Communications Agency (MECA)** – Steve Gray explained the structure of SB2835, which creates the Mississippi Emergency Communications Authority, including the membership of the advisory board and the Director's role. The Bill aims to create a comprehensive approach to NG911

implementation including funding. The 911 surcharge on phone lines increases from \$1/line/month to \$2, with CAP placed on 25 land lines and 250 VOIP/address. The Department of Revenue will collect and remit the funds, and the state auditor will now have auditing authority over the funds. The bill includes grants to help locals become Next-Generation 911 compliant.

**4) Group Membership for the MS NENA Chapter** – Jim Steil mentioned that Mississippi has established a state chapter for the National Emergency Numbering Association (NENA). All the technical standards implemented in 911 are developed by NENA and it will be important for as many Mississippians involved with 911 as are able to participate in the process. Individual joining fees are reasonable, ~\$125, but if funds were to be pooled a group membership would save money for everyone involved with technical 911 workflows. Not certain how such accounting could be managed but believe it would be worthwhile saving and encourage participation.

**5) Support for the Discovery Initiative** – Scott Trapolino mentioned a recent meeting of the MS Chapter of NENA with several of the attendees present. Cristen Campanella, Oktibbeha County 911 and Toby Sanford have developed a dashboard and survey tool to gather 911 data statewide. The initiative aims to reach out to every PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point) to gather data before the Emergency Communications Authority meets in August.

Scott Trapolino formally requested the GIS Council's support for the discovery initiative to gather 911 data. The initiative is in collaboration and support of MS NENA Chapter, MS 911 Coordinator's Association, MARIS, MAST, and others. The goal is multifold – save money and time for the 911 Authority by having a current NG readiness status available for analysis and to limit the number of times PSAP personnel are surveyed by using one survey for all organizations. Motion made by Rebecca Powell and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jim Steil. The Council unanimously supported the motion.

**6) Nominees for the Mississippi Emergency Communications Authority (MECA)** – With guidance from Wyatt Dunn, the Council discussed the likely protocol and timeline for submitting nominees to the 911 Authority. Scott Trapolino had been previously recognized as the most knowledgeable GIS Council member regarding GIS point

addressing. Wyatt Dunn explained that the nominees of the GIS Council to the MECA do not need to be voting Council members. With this information, Haley Feather was recognized as the second choice as the MECA nominee.

- 7) Reformation of the Policy Advisory Committee and Technical Users Group (PAC and TUG)** – Jim Steil explained the legislative obligation and opportunity to reform the PAC and TUG groups to support the upcoming needs of NG911. The PAC is designated as members with a GIS policy interest from each non-voting entity of the GIS Council. The original list of PAC members will be used to begin. The TUG is open to all with technical interests in GIS. A broad call will be put out to the community through MAST, SCAUG, and MARIS statewide users' groups.
- 8) Focus on Intra-Council Coordination** – Jim Steil began a general discussion regarding the need and opportunity for better coordination among member conferences. This should be a very low-cost method for promoting the benefits of better GIS Coordination by having a session or table whenever appropriate to the audience. Council members agreed to work together to better coordinate their individual activities and promote the council's mission. The effort aims to save money and improve the GIS council's visibility, participation, and impact.
- 9) Review of GIS Council Structure and Challenges** – Steve Gray led a discussion of the structural limitations of the GIS Council and potential avenues to resolve. Currently, the GIS Council is structurally un-fundable outside of data collection through special federal funding. While the specific legislative obligations of each member are sufficient, the scope of the coordination effort is too great to achieve solely volunteerism. Several approaches were discussed including requesting a formal review to seek an overarching legislative fix such as was just completed for 911. The key missing elements needed are: 1) A Geographic Information Officer (GIO) to be the full-time policy point of contact for Mississippi governmental GIS. 2) A statewide GIS Coordinator to support the programs and efforts of the GIO 3) Operational funding for the MARIS to act as the State GIS Office and fulfill the legislative duties of data aggregation, standardization, and distribution. 4) Operational funding for the existing overarching GIS Council roles of DEQ and ITS.

The recent success of SB2835 to create the Mississippi Emergency Communications Authority (MECA) demonstrated the capability of carefully crafting overarching legislation to address current structural gaps which have become apparent with a maturing sector of increasing importance.

Sean Hodges (MFC) emphasized the importance of consistent messaging to the legislature about the value of the GIS Council and direct benefits of regularly supporting the legislative mission of reducing duplicative efforts to save time and money.

Haley Feather gave examples of other states, such as Arkansas and North Carolina, that have successfully overcome similar issues. Each state highlighted the need for a centralized authority and funding to support coordinated GIS efforts.

#### **10)Other / New Business**

- a. **MDEM Funding Withheld/Delayed** - Steve Champlin (DEQ), discussed the delay of the \$2.8M federal funding for this year and plans to compensate for the current setback by planning to acquire two-thirds of the state with fresh imagery in the next leaf-off cycle. Blake Pickering mentioned there may be a need to communicate with the Department of Revenue for a waiver on behalf of the various counties who had planned to fulfill their under legal obligation to refresh their imagery with this past winter's flight due to funding issues.
- b. **Existing Standards Review** – The discussion of the rules set by Department of Revenue in the late 1980s for imagery collection progressed into the increasing needs for review of the technical standards in place by the GIS Council. The current basis for our imagery standard specifies ariel contact prints – predating the use of orthoimagery for parcel mapping. Scott Trapolino expressed this delay as an opportunity to revisit the current standard in place. Steve Champlin shared that DEQ is compiling a 175-page comprehensive list of all the standards used to acquire MDEM data to date. Most of the recent acquisitions exceed the original MDEM standards established 20 years ago. It was noted that each entity has either their own existing GIS standards or requirements in addition to the list being compiled by DEQ. It was noted that

GIS is not a static production line and requires regular reevaluation to remain relevant.

Carl Zitta (Oktibbeha County Chief Technical Officer) Volunteered to expand on an effort he had to collect and identify the existing GIS standards. After discussion, it was decided that the Standards Review Committee, which had previously developed the GIS Point Addressing Standard, would identify and collect existing GIS standards being used by state agencies. A formal motion was made by Jim Steil for Carl Zitta to Chair the Standards Review Committee, seconded by Wayne Willaims.

**11)Next meeting** – Next meeting is scheduled for July 22<sup>nd</sup> at 10:30 AM Location TBD

**12)Adjournment:**