

1 Interview Summaries

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Interview Type	Regional Planning Commission
Interview Location	Ellsworth, Maine
Interview Date	October 18, 2001
Summary Date	December 5, 2001
Interviewer	Thomas Burns agismap1@maine.rr.com
Interviewed:	James Fisher, Planner II, fisher@acadia.net Gordon Longworth, GIS Lab Director, College of the Atlantic gordonl@ecology.coa.edu Jef Fitzgerald, Planner I, fitzgerald@acadia.net Staff Size (5)
Budget (approx)	\$400,000
URL:	http://www.hcpcme.org

1.1.1 Agency Overview

The Hancock County Planning Commission is a traditional regional planning commission offering a range of services to communities who do not have formal staffing to perform state-mandated tasks. Other traditional activities include joint purchasing and transportation projects.

1.1.2 GIS Initiatives

GIS activities are very modest. There is no formal GIS program. However, the planning staff takes opportunities to encourage their member communities to develop GIS capabilities.

HCPC cooperates on an infrequent basis with the College of the Atlantic particularly when the HCPC project concerns a municipality on Mount Desert Island. There is some technical support that COA is able to provide from time-to-time and interns are available but there is no formal arrangement between HCPC and COA regarding GIS.

A GIS project of digitizing parcel maps for those towns that front Frenchman's Bay was made possible through an award to the Frenchman's Bay Conservancy by the Maine Outdoor Heritage Foundation. Although HCPC has no ownership in this project, some of their member towns have sought HCPC's assistance to quality assure the work product from the contractor.

1.1.2.1 Overview of GIS Utilization

GIS is not widely in use at HCPC. Occasionally, the Planning staff has assembled storyboards employing GIS overlay techniques and data integration to demonstrate land development issues. Planning staff is very creative with extremely limited resources. The Planners are keenly aware of the potential of GIS but are not able to generate much interest in the professional services that would employ GIS capabilities.

1.1.2.2 GIS Operating Environment and Infrastructure

HCPC has an internal Windows95 peer-to-peer network. The GIS software is ArcView 3.2a running on a Dell OptiPlex Gxi, 300 MHz processor and 64 mb RAM. There are no plans to upgrade to ArcView 8.1 at this time. They have a small 12" x 12" digitizing tablet and an 11 x 17 Canon color printer. Additionally, they have a Garmin GPS device capable of plus-or-minus 10-meter accuracy.

1.1.2.3 GIS Data Resources and Requirements

1.1.2.3.1 Spatial Data

Existing data sets include:

HCPC does not house data and does not develop data for member communities. They will download and use, on a project-by-project basis, OGIS basemap data layers.

Currently unavailable but desired data sets include:

Parcel Composites for all their member communities.

1.1.2.4 GIS Applications and Application Requirements

HCPC does not have any GIS applications.

Planned future GIS activity and applications:

Continued QA/QC assistance to Frenchman's Bay Conservancy. They are seeking ways to employ their GIS capability for economic development.

1.1.3 Other Relevant Issues

Both Planners and the GIS Lab Director for the College of the Atlantic were astute observers of GIS and its deployment or non-deployment in municipal functions. All three have long experience working in matters of public policy. Unanimously, they made five major points:

- The use of GIS needs to be made easier; 'let's get back to basics;'
- Data layers already posted on the OGIS web site are underutilized; Maine towns should mine the resources already available to them;
- ESRI should integrate or promote extensions to ArcView 3X or AV 8.1 scripts to perform routine municipal functions such as abutters lists, financial accounting, and assessment reporting;
- Metadata and general education about all aspects of GIS are not understood. A massive educational campaign should be undertaken. Currently, they think the education of clients is a major, hidden cost in GIS-related activities.
- Training Facilities and technical resources should be concentrated and promoted.

They Planner's took issue with the presumption that 'sprawl' should be a major focus of the State's policy efforts. The demographics in Hancock County show an aging population due to many retirees who have settled there. To them, quality-of-life and natural resource protection are the central issues not sprawl.

1.1.4 Major Benefits and Cost Justification

HCPC has had difficulty justifying any cost related to GIS.