

Statement of John M. Palatiello
On behalf of MAPPS and the National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS)
Before the House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
April 10, 2014

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, I am John Palatiello and I am honored to appear before you today on behalf of MAPPS, the national trade association of private sector geospatial firms, and the National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS), the national professional society of individual licensed surveyors regarding the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 3DEP program, and the land inventory activities of the Department of the Interior in general and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in particular.

MAPPS and NSPS enthusiastically support the USGS 3DEP, or 3-dimensional elevation program. We respectfully urge the subcommittee to fully fund this important program as requested in the President's budget, or, if possible, increase the appropriations level to meet the extraordinary demand for current, accurate elevation data for the nation.

USGS Public-Private Partnership - Mr. Chairman, this subcommittee has a great success story that is not well known. Beginning in the mid-1990's, this subcommittee included language in its annual report accompanying its fiscal year appropriations for Interior and related agencies instructing the USGS to begin utilizing the qualified and capable private sector in surveying and mapping that the United States is blessed to have. Prior to the enactment of that language, USGS was seen by private firms as a source of competition, not a source of potential business. The subcommittee, beginning under the leadership of full committee Chairman Livingston and subcommittee Chairman Regula, helped transform USGS into the modern, responsive, cooperative geospatial agency it is today.

The USGS now manages a series of Geospatial Products and Services Contracts (GPSC) that includes seven prime contractors and more than 90 subcontractors to perform a variety of surveying, mapping and geospatial services, such as imagery and LiDAR data acquisition; photogrammetric mapping; aerotriangulation; orthophotography; thematic mapping; geographic information systems development; surveying and control acquisition; image manipulation, analysis, and interpretation; map digitizing; data manipulations; primary and ancillary data acquisition; metadata production and revision; and the production or revision of geospatial products.

These are Qualifications Based Selection (QBS) contracts competitively awarded under the "Brooks Act" (40 USC 1101 and part 36.6 of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR 48 CFR 36.6)) and task orders are negotiated directly with selected firms to provide contract services. The GPSC can accommodate the mapping requirements of all USGS offices and is also available to any Federal, State, or local agency.

The primary data currently procured via the GPSC contracts is for the 3DEP program. This features light detection and ranging (LIDAR) data in the conterminous United States and interferometric synthetic aperture radar (IFSAR) in Alaska.

3DEP - 3DEP will satisfy the growing demand for consistent, high-quality topographic data and a wide range of other three-dimensional representations of the Nation's natural and constructed features. Among the applications that will benefit from 3DEP data are flood risk management, agriculture, water supply, homeland security, renewable energy, aviation safety, and other areas. Indeed, USGS has identified more than 600 applications that would benefit from such enhanced elevation data. 3DEP will promote economic growth, facilitate responsible environmental protection and resource development and management, assist with infrastructure improvement, and generally enhance the quality of life of all Americans.

The USGS, with involvement from the private sector and other stakeholders, conducted a National Enhanced Elevation Assessment (NEEA), to determine and document the need for national elevation data within government and private markets. The results indicated that enhanced elevation data have the potential to generate \$13 billion in annual benefits, at a benefit:cost ratio of 4.7 to 1.

The equipment infrastructure and service capacity and capability of the private sector, as well as the contract vehicles in USGS, are in place to efficiently implement the 3DEP program. Moreover, Congress provided an innovative mechanism for cooperative activities in elevation data when it enacted the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act, in the MAP-21 Act, Public Law 112-141, in July of 2012. It included section 100220, which can be utilized to pool funding from Federal, state and local government entities for elevation data. USGS was specifically named in that provision. Section 100121 required a National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) study on how FEMA can improve interagency and intergovernmental coordination on flood mapping, including a funding strategy to leverage and coordinate budgets and expenditures and establish joint funding mechanisms with other Federal agencies and units of State and local government to share the collection and utilization of data among all governmental users. NAPA recently published "FEMA Flood Mapping: Enhancing Coordination to Maximize Performance" in which it proposed (page 11): "Recommendation 15: The Office of Management and Budget should use the 3DEP implementation plan for nationwide elevation data collection to guide the development of the President's annual budget request." In light of the controversy over FEMA flood insurance rates, particularly as that influenced the recent enactment of the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014 Public Law, 113-89, on March 21, 2014, there is an even more urgent and compelling need for the high-quality elevation data that 3DEP provides.

Given the attention the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has given to agency duplication in geospatial activities (including "OMB and Agencies Can Reduce Duplication by Making Coordination a Priority", GAO-14-226T, December 5, 2013), we believe 3DEP stands out as a best practices model for coordination, inter-agency and inter-governmental cooperation, and a strong definition of government and private sector roles and responsibilities in a public-private partnership.

While 3DEP and GPSC are success stories, there is an area where improvement is needed.

Land Inventories - National Public Radio recently reported on Government Accountability Office (GAO) findings that \$2 billion is expended on unneeded buildings owned by the Federal government. The Washington Post then noted, “the NPR article is excellent but it vastly underestimates the size of the problem. In addition to empty buildings, the Federal government owns/controls millions of acres of land that are worth hundreds of billions and perhaps even trillions of dollars. The land is not being used to its full value or potential even though maintenance costs runs in the tens of billions annually.”

Since 2003, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has repeatedly designated “Managing Federal Real Property” one of the high-risk areas within the Federal government most prone to waste, fraud and abuse. This activity is again on the list released by GAO on February 14, 2013 (GAO-13-283). One of the reasons cited by GAO is the fact that the government does not have a current, accurate inventory of the land it owns. The General Services Administration (GSA) collects data from at least 30 Federal agencies, but its system has been criticized by GAO for being “unreliable and of limited usefulness” and “not current or reliable.” The last official report on unneeded federal land (1997) indicated that the Bureau of Land Management alone is holding more than 3.4 million acres that had been identified for disposal through the agency’s land use planning process.

On the other hand, the government inefficiently maintains a plethora of land inventories that are inaccurate, out-of-date, single purpose, and non-interoperable. In testimony before this Subcommittee on March 2, 2005, then-Secretary Gail Norton said, “The Department currently uses 26 different financial management systems and over 100 different property systems. Employees must enter procurement transactions multiple times in different systems so that the data are captured in real property inventories, financial systems, and acquisition systems. This fractured approach is both costly and burdensome to manage.”

Unfortunately, little has been done to reduce and consolidate this proliferation of land inventories. We strongly urge the subcommittee to include language requiring the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Administrator of the General Services Administration, and the Comptroller General of the United States, conduct an assessment of all land inventories authorized, operated or maintained by all Executive agencies of the Federal government. This “inventory of inventories” will identify duplicate and wasteful activities that can be eliminated. All agencies owning Federal real property should have an improved accounting of their land assets. Such an inventory will assist in improved Federal land management, resource conservation, environmental protection and utilization of real property, and identify property the Federal government no longer needs to own. With today’s geographic information systems (GIS) technology, this is a perfect example where the Federal government can “map it once, use it many times”.

The subcommittee should request that the Secretary identify the over 100 property systems and indicate how many are still maintained by the Department today and what, if anything, has

been done to integrate, merge, consolidate or terminate any of the more than 100 property systems? Additionally, data should be provided on the annual cost of operating and maintaining these 100+ systems and whether there are other land inventories operated and maintained by the Department that are not included in the 100 mentioned by Secretary Norton.

Section 201 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) [43 U.S.C. 1711] requires the Secretary to “prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of all public lands and ... This inventory shall be kept current ...” . We recommend that the Subcommittee determine the status of that inventory, its currency and accuracy, and the annual cost of operating and maintaining that inventory. Executive Order 13327, “Federal Real Property Asset Management,” calls for “a single, comprehensive, and descriptive database of all real property under the custody and control of all executive branch agencies”. However, it exempts public domain lands. Section 7 states “In order to ensure that Federally owned lands, other than the real property covered by this order, are managed in the most effective and economic manner, the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior shall take such steps as are appropriate to improve their management of public lands and National Forest System lands and shall develop appropriate legislative proposals necessary to facilitate that result.” It is our understanding that no actions have been taken to include the public domain lands in the Real Property Inventory, no steps have been taken by Secretaries of the Interior or Agriculture as required by section 7 of the Executive Order and no legislative proposals have been developed pursuant to section 7. The subcommittee should seek information on these activities as well.

In conclusion, our request and recommendations to the Subcommittee are:

Congress should appropriate funds for the 3DEP program at its optimal annual level of \$146 million among all participating agencies, including, at a minimum, the \$5 million for 3DEP, \$236,000 for Alaska Mapping, \$1.9 million for The National Map Modernization, and \$60,428,000 for the National Geospatial Program in the President’s request for USGS.

Language should be included once again reaffirming that USGS utilize the private sector for more than 50 percent of its appropriated mapping and digital data production funds; and

The subcommittee should request that the Interior Department provide information on (or formally request of Chairman Rogers that the full Committee’s Surveys and Investigations staff conduct a study of) federal land inventory activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views and we look forward to working with the subcommittee to continue the work to build on past success and further improve the Interior Department’s surveying, mapping and geospatial activities.