

Now is the Time for the Geospatial Community to Contact Congress in Support of 3DEP

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has launched a program to provide a national elevation dataset to a common standard with scheduled updates. The [3DEP program](#) is based on a recommended 8-year acquisition cycle at a cost of \$146 million per year, to be shared among several agency budgets.

The 3DEP program features light detection and ranging (LIDAR) data in the conterminous United States and interferometric synthetic aperture radar (IFSAR) in Alaska.

President Obama's 2015 budget request includes a \$5 million increase for 3DEP, a \$236,000 increase for Alaska mapping and a \$1.9 million increase for The National Map Modernization, through the USGS. On April 10 John Palatiello, MAPPs Executive Director and NSPS government affairs consultant, [testified](#) in favor of 3DEP before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior.

For members of the geospatial community who support 3DEP, now is the time to communicate that support to your members of Congress. Emails, faxes, telephone calls and personal conversations with [Congressmen](#) and Senators indicating the need for the national elevation data to be created by 3DEP should be conveyed. (Due to the anthrax letters mailed to the offices of two U.S. Senators in 2001, regular mail to Congress is now severely delayed and is not recommended as a timely means of communication.)

3DEP will satisfy the growing demand for consistent, high-quality elevation 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.

In response to a request from USGS, MAPPs, the association of private sector geospatial firms, conducted an analysis of existing and future private sector LIDAR data acquisition capacity and capability. The equipment infrastructure, 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.

When Congress passed the [Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform](#), in the

MAP-21 Act, (P.L. 112-141), including the highway bill, FEMA flood reform and changes to the federal student loan program, in 2012, it included a variety of mapping-related provisions.

A key 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. In November, the [NAPA report](#) was published. Included is the following recommendation (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."

"3DEP is a best practices model for coordination, inter-agency and intergovernmental cooperation, and a strong definition of government and private sector roles and responsibilities in a public-private partnership," Palatiello said in his testimony. ■

Nick Palatiello is Vice President for External Affairs for John M. Palatiello & Associates, where he oversees and supervises all communications with outside audiences. JMP&A clients include MAPPs, the Maryland Society of Surveyors and government affairs consultant for the National Society of Professional Surveyors.