

THE COAL-MINING SPATIAL DATA STANDARDS ASTM TASK GROUP

OSM has published notice of the formation of a task group that will establish standards for coal-mining geospatial data that are consonant with procedures of the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) International. The Coal Mining Spatial Data Standards ASTM Task Group, working under the auspices of OSM's TIPS program, consists of volunteer representatives of various State coal-mining regulatory programs, OSM offices, the Mine Safety and Health Administration, the coal-mining industry, and the general public.

The task group was formed following a national meeting of Geospatial Data Stewards, a group that comprises representatives of State, tribal, and Federal offices, all of whom administer the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA). At this meeting, held June 27 and 28, 2006, in Denver, Colorado, the National Coal Mining Geospatial Committee (NCMGC) began the task-group formation process by announcing plans and requesting volunteers to help develop voluntary standards for the exchange of coal-mining spatial data among State, tribal, and OSM offices, as well as the coal-mining industry and the public.

The NCMGC operates as a partnership between OSM and State and tribal programs authorized to administer SMCRA; NCMGC members also represent the geospatial technology coal-mining interests of the Interstate Mining Compact Commission, the National Association of Abandoned Mine Lands Programs, and the Western Interstate Energy Board. OSM's TIPS program has supported the NCMGC partnership with funding, staff, and technology since that committee's creation in 2005.

The first Coal-Mining Spatial Data Standards ASTM Task Group meeting was held September 20 and 21, 2006, at ASTM International Headquarters near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At this meeting, task-group members learned about the ASTM International standards-development process and began work on standards for the first two national coal-mining geospatial data sets—surface coal-mining boundaries and underground coal-mining boundaries. The task group will work on many issues to define the content, scope, accuracy, geometry, attributes, metadata, and other characteristics of these first two data sets. Developing standards for the data sets will advance the use of geospatial technology in implementing SMCRA, improve response to coal-mining-related emergencies, and help protect the public from the potential impacts of coal-mining operations.

In 2007, the task group will continue its work on the two initial coal-mining geospatial data sets, and, in future years, it will develop standards for additional data sets. These data sets, termed "layers" by users of computer-software mapping applications, may include geologic sampling locations and their chemical attributes, surface- and ground-water sampling locations and the water-quality attributes associated with them, and other coal-mining features determined by the task group to be of national interest.

OSM's Alan Wilhelm and Larry Evans, of the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, co-chair and provide able coordination and leadership to the 11-member task group. Joe Ritchey, a qualified professional facilitator who is both knowledgeable and experienced in the development of voluntary standards under ASTM International policies and procedures,

provides technical support to the group. Julie Maitra, Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), serves as liaison to provide coordination between her committee and the group. (Throughout the development process, the task group intends to cooperate with the FGDC, which is an interagency committee that is hosted by the U.S. Geological Survey and that promotes, on a national basis, the coordinated development, use, sharing, and dissemination of geospatial data.)

At this time, the 11 members of the task group are:

Alan Wilhelm (co-chair)	OSM, Western Region Office
Arielle Feitelson	OSM, Appalachian Region Office
Bruce Johnson	North Dakota Public Service Commission
Daniel Kestner	Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy
Jo Gault	OSM, Knoxville Field Office
Joe Ritchey (facilitator)	ASTM International
Kathy Rossman	Ohio Division of Mineral Resources Management
Larry Evans (co-chair)	West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection
Mike Shank	West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection
Sandin Phillipson	Mine Safety and Health Administration
Tom Galya	OSM, Charleston Field Office

The task group is planning its 2007 meetings for Costa Mesa, California, on January 30, for Newport, Virginia, in June, and for Salt Lake City, Utah, in September.