

Looking Forward to the Fall Conference in St. Cloud

By Sally Wakefield, 2006 Conference Chair

Time is flying by as preparations continue for the 2006 Minnesota GIS/LIS Fall Conference and Workshops, the largest statewide GIS/LIS conference in the Midwest. The conference will be held in beautiful St. Cloud for one more year, on October 4-6, pleasing many who have missed the Wednesday - Friday schedule. As the only person to chair two successive conferences in recent memory (what was I thinking?!), I invite you all to read below about the conference details in place so far!

Workshops: The workshop committee again conducted a survey to learn more about which training participants are most interested in. From those results, a robust slate of workshops is being developed that reflects the needs of our members. The goal, as always, is to offer a broad range of low-cost, high-quality training.

The workshops will be offered on October 4. We are working to secure enough space to hold all of the workshops on the St. Cloud State University campus, with bus transportation to and from the Civic Center. Parking, registration and a continental breakfast will be available that morning at the St. Cloud Civic Center.

Sessions and Posters: The call for presentations was recently sent to more than 1400 Consortium members, those who have attended previous conferences or who have requested mailings. Submissions are being accepted online with a deadline of May 28. A high turnout is expected with enough presentations to again run seven concurrent tracks, including a full track of product demonstrations. Poster abstracts are also being accepted and the planning committee invites submission of both project-specific and cartographic examples this year.

Plenary Sessions: We are pleased to have Dr. Jerry Dobson, a true GIS pioneer, scheduled to deliver our opening keynote address. Dr. Jerome E. (Jerry) Dobson is Professor of Geography at the University of Kansas, President of the American Geographical Society, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, an elected member of the Honors Committee of the Association of American Geographers and a Corresponding Individual Member of the International Geographical Union.

While his current research focuses on improving methods and technology for mapping minefields, he previously led development of the LandScan Global Population Database which has become the world standard for estimating populations at risk during natural disasters, wars, and terrorist acts. LandScan recently gained widespread acclaim as the only feasible means of estimating populations impacted by the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia.

Dr. Dobson will address the conference on the growing influence of geospatial technology (the GIS revolution). He will reflect on the expanding use of GIS and insights from his personal work and experiences, including ethical considerations we all must face as this technology becomes more widespread and prevalent in society.

High school students will close the conference with a presentation of GIS in the Classroom. These students and their teacher will demonstrate how they have learned about spatial technology through the Firewise program, a successful statewide effort funded by the DNR to engage students in planning and preventing urban wildfires through the use of spatial analysis. The students will be our guests that day, visiting the exhibit area and participating in conference sessions.

Events and Entertainment: There will be plenty of delicious food and good discussion throughout the conference, but none as fine as during the vendor's reception on Thursday

evening. The reception promises to have the tastiest morsels, the liveliest of conversation, and of course door prizes and a cash bar. Following the reception, The Boreal Brewers of Bemidji will return to the conference to conduct the annual beer tasting event. This year the beer tasting will be expanded to include a [silent auction](#) with all proceeds supporting the Consortium's scholarship fund. Details are still being worked out so stay tuned. Planning for a social event on Wednesday evening following the workshops is also underway.

Seated luncheons on both days will include recognition ceremonies. On Thursday, honors will be given to those receiving prestigious awards from the Consortium in addition to Governor's Commendation presented by the Governor's Council on Geographic Information. On Friday, outstanding higher education students from across Minnesota competing in the Consortium Scholarship Paper and Poster competition will be recognized and awarded.

Registration: Online conference registration will open late July using a newly designed Consortium website and registration system. A preliminary program will be mailed and posted on the Consortium's website prior to registration, providing an overview of the many workshops, sessions, learning and social opportunities being made available during the conference.

If you have any conference-related suggestions, comments, recommendations (or praises), please feel free to contact me at conference2006@mngislis.org. I hope to see each and every one of you in St. Cloud!!

http://www.mngislis.org/newsletter/issue45/Conference_Update.htm