

Where Have All the U.S. Government Surveyors (and Other Geospatial Professionals) Gone?

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Key words: Capacity building; History; geodesy crisis; government

SUMMARY

For over 200 years, some form of the current National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has been responsible for delivering geodetic control to all other civilian Federal agencies of the U.S. Government. Most of those years consisted of the NGS or a predecessor agency directly collecting the data that was then disseminated internally and on to other agencies. As of this writing, the NGS is comprised of less than 200 full time personnel, and has not been directly collecting the “backbone” geospatial data of geodetic control for at least a few decades. If we’re so small, yet both the value and the impact of high-accuracy positional data has increased so much in these recent decades... then where have all those surveyors gone? Of course, we know that the task of geodetic data collection has become exponentially more efficient in conjunction with the advent and proliferation of GNSS technology. So too has the process of creating geographic products from that data, made efficient by the absolute explosion of GIS technology. But where, among the dozens of Federal agencies with large holdings of geospatial data, are the mapmakers? Along with examining the surveyors, the author will review which agencies have geodesists, cartographers, and other geospatial professionals within their ranks, all of whom must rely on the work of the NGS to accomplish their own missions. These statistics will be based on freely available resources from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Join our author for a talk filled with the alphabet soup of Government acronyms!

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FIG Working Week 2023
Protecting Our World, Conquering New Frontiers
Orlando, Florida, USA, 28 May–1 June 2023