

The Columbia Regional Geospatial Service Center System: A Model for Rural Geospatial Support for the Nation

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The Columbia Regional Geospatial Service Center System (Texas) represents a unique approach to regional geospatial support for emergency response and planning, economic development and resource management. The system had its origins with the Forest Resources Institute (FRI), funding initially through a startup grant from the T.L.L. Temple Foundation in 1997. The idea was to "level the playing field" for traditionally underserved rural communities, primarily for economic development and resource management. FRI's geospatial support system evolved to include regional emergency planning and response. From the outset, we took a bottom-up approach to serving our constituency, especially in time of emergency. This concept was tested during the Shuttle Columbia disaster. Staff members were able to begin their mapping in only 22 minutes. Congress funded establishment and support of the prototype system in 2005 and 2006. The system now includes the University of Texas at El Paso and the Texas Natural Resources Information System, and Texas Tech University. Structure and functionality of the system will be presented.

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