

Final Report of the LEPF Small Grant for
GIS IMPLEMENTATION
Awarded to the Seneca Soil & Water Conservation
District

Objective

To implement a Geographical Information System (GIS) that will allow the Seneca Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) and its staff to better assist the public in the conservation and improved use of our natural resources. By creating and maintaining a Geographical Information System, we at the Seneca SWCD can more efficiently assist landowners, target areas in need of assistance, keep better records and evaluate program performance.

Methods

- Contribute financial and technical resources to the Seneca county GIS partnership.
- Obtain and install GIS desktop software on all capable Seneca SWCD hardware.
- Send Seneca SWCD staff GIS coordinators (2) to applicable training.
- Continually, develop and maintain GIS maps and database information.
- Train entire District staff on use of GIS software and data.
- Share data, maps and experiences with any interested parties.

Results

The most recent financial contribution to the Seneca county GIS partnership is for the parcel rectification project. This data will be finished and ready for use in June 2002. Meanwhile we have installed the software on one hardware system by using a licensing agreement with USDA, a Seneca SWCD partner, and ESRI, the makers of the software. We are currently working to install the software on all SWCD hardware.

The two GIS coordinators and two other staff have completed an ESRI certified, Introduction to ArcView class. The two GIS coordinators,

one specializing in Seneca County Ditch Maintenance information and one specializing in Seneca SWCD information, have been working very closely with county GIS staff and other GIS specialists to develop and implement the best system possible.

To date, the system's information developed is no where close to the potential or goals of Seneca SWCD. With the limited information the system has already proven it's worth. We have used the system to more accurately delineate watersheds for ditch, tile, waterway and wetland installations. Tracking and recording the inspection of maintenance ditches along with the identification of landowners in a particular project or problem area has become more effective with GIS.

In the near future we will be developing data and programming to go through the legal process of ditch maintenance assessment collection, track filter strip, waterway and wetland installation and conservation tillage practices. The process of developing and maintaining data and information in GIS software is a continual task; the Seneca SWCD is using their current staff to perform until greater need warrants a different approach.

Within the next month our office will be contracting services with the Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District to help us develop programming and data for our GIS information. The Delaware SWCD has a GIS specialist on staff overseeing and improving their system. He will also be providing our coordinators and staff with application specific training. This cooperation effort will allow us to reap some of the benefits of a staff specialist without the entire cost.

All landowners and other parties that have seen maps produced by our system or received information from our GIS have positively responded to the improvement.

Conclusions

The implementation of GIS into the Seneca SWCD has only begun to reward our customers and our natural resources. Through the continued cooperation with the Seneca GIS partnership the District will be able to maximize investment returns on data development and maintenance by reducing costs, yet not negotiating results or quality. The relationship and exchange of information between users is essential in these types of systems when they are not the key component of accomplishing business goals.

Natural resources and those who conserve them are only going to continue to see benefits from this implementation. The Seneca SWCD has made the commitment to develop this system for the benefit of the District, the residents, landowners and agencies of Seneca county and our natural resources.

Benefits

As described previously, the uses of this information and system will be limitless as well as the benefits. The benefits have already and will continue to be evident to many individuals, interests and resources. All those parties who have received GIS data and/or maps from our office are impressed with the accuracy, professionalism and possibilities of the information.

Our natural resources and Lake Erie have benefited by the District's improved access and organization of information linked to its geographical location. Future and current programs the District implements will be bettered by improved targeting, record keeping and evaluation.

Dissemination

Our elementary geographical information system has already been viewed and used by numerous landowners and cooperators, along with all staff and other agencies for program planning purposes. We are beginning to plan our annual banquet where the system and the Lake Erie Protection Fund contributions will be presented to attendees. The county GIS partnership is also using some of our information and staff knowledge in their GIS work as well.

As the system continues to grow so will its "marketing plan" and supporters, because of the help of the Lake Erie Commission.