

House Joint Resolution 19 Sponsor Statement

"Urging the United States Congress to pass legislation to fund the acquisition of high-resolution digital orthoimagery and digital elevation data for the entire state of Alaska."

Orthoimagery combines the image characteristics of aerial photography with the geometric qualities of a map. Major uses of this imagery include hazard prevention and public safety, land transfer programs, resource assessment, exploration and development, and community and economic development.

Current maps and imagery of Alaska are very old, inaccurate and of limited usefulness. The majority of our current maps were produced in the 1950s and the latest statewide imagery was produced mainly between 1978 and 1982. Neither of these mapping efforts reflects the current conditions of Alaska's landscape and environment. In addition, both are in analog form and are difficult to incorporate into modern geographic information systems.

Reliable geographic data is necessary for the economic and resource development of our state. Orthoimagery and digital elevation data for Alaska will greatly enhance our land management capabilities and benefit resource development and conservation as well as public access, recreation, safety, emergency response to wild fires and other natural disasters, design and management of transportation corridors, community development and tourism, environmental assessments and permitting. Most of the coterminous states now have this technology and geological information available to them. This resolution seeks to encourage Congress to offer the same benefit to Alaska that it has provided to other states.

The data management for these geographic systems strives to provide a nationally consistent and cost effective means to share geospatial data at all levels of government and industry. An Internet-based network, the Alaska Geospatial Data Clearinghouse (AGDC), would be the initial focal point where data users could access the digital orthoimagery and elevation data produced by the initiative. Currently AGDC is investigating the potential of setting up an in-state repository for this data in the Supercomputer Facility at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Doing so would provide real-time access and long-term management of the data and an important, secondary data archive site in addition to the Earth Resource Observation Systems (EROS) Data Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Over 50 organizations have expressed support for this mapping effort. Organizations including Resource Development Council (RDC), Alaska Land Managers Forum (ALMF), Arctic Power, Inc. and the Alaska Airmen's Association as well as many state departments, native corporations, oil companies, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the US Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited and the Sierra Club.

Given the numerous advantages of digitally accessible geophysical data and its broad support, I encourage your positive consideration of this resolution.