

GISCorps October Newsletter

October 2007

In This Issue

- A Message from the Core Committee
- Deployment and Partnership News
- URISA Announcements
- URISA's 45th Annua Conference
- Shop for GISCorps Stuff!
- GCCDS Mission

Other Organizations
URISA

GISCorps Partner Agencies

EWB

GSDI

MMEX

UNDP

UNHCR

LINIIC

VVAF

Volunteers for Prosperity

Relief Agency Links

Relief Web

global hub for time-critical humanitarian information on Complex Emergencies and Natural Disasters

Data/Information Links

Farthwatch Institute

Earthwatch Institute is an international non-profit organization that brings science to

A Message from the Core Committee

Volunteers and Friends of the GISCorps

We report in this newsletter on our activities since August including those at the URISA's 45th Annual Conference.

Please welcome our two new Core Committee members: Ingrid Bruce with the City of Rancho Cucamonga, CA and Kevin Sato with the Murray City Corporation, Utah.

Please also congratulate Juna Papajorgji who was elected the chair of the GISCorps and Mark Salling who was elected Vice Chair.

As always, we value your support and look forward to meeting you at upcoming events.

GISCorps Core Committee,

Juna Papajorgji, Shoreh Elhami, Mark Salling, Dianne Haley, Ingrid Bruce, Kevin Sato

P.S. Please email info@giscorps.org if you want to be removed from this list.

Deployment and Partnership News

• In September, Juna Papajorgji, the Chair of the GISCorps, taught a GIS course to students and faculty of the Kabul Polytechnic University, in Kabul Afghanistan. This project was in partnership with Engineers Without Borders International (EWB).



life for people concerned about the Earth's future.

Service at Sea

Service at Sea is a ship-based technology assistance program that will begin a circumnavigation of the earth in August, 2007, with a goal to assist conservation organizations who are using GIS technology to meet goals of their communities.

Society for Conservation GIS

A non-profit organization supporting individuals using GIS and science for the conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage

GISCorps Core Committee

Juna Papajorgji, Chair, Cofounder Mark Salling, Vice Chair Shoreh Elhami, Co-founder Dianne Haley Ingrid Bruce Kevin Sato

Contact Us

http://www.giscorps.org Email: info@giscorps.org

- GISCorps Volunteer, David Allen, recently completed a mission in Biloxi, Mississippi. He taught ArcGIS to the Golf Coast Community Design Studio's team from August 14-18, 2007. You can read more about David's mission later in this newsletter and at: http://www.giscorps.org/GCCDS.php
- GISCorps is initiating several K-12 related projects. Two projects involve providing GIS assistance to 4-H clubs in Collier County, Florida and Sac City, Iowa. The third K-12 project is in Cincinnati, Ohio where we need 75 volunteers during Geography Awareness Week. To learn more about our K-12 activities and to volunteer for the Ohio mission visit our K-12 site at: http://giscorps.org/k_12.php
- We are considering implementation of several new projects as follows:
- One mission has started in partnership with the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association (GSDI) on a community SDI for food security and agricultural management in West Africa. Two volunteers have been selected to work remotely: Philippe Duchesne from Belgium and Andrea Chavez from Florida.
- New Mission in partnership with Agriculture Development International and Volunteers in Oversees Cooperative Assistance (ACDI/VOCA). GISCorps volunteer Fernando Sedano, from California has been selected for this mission and will be heading to Mozambique for 25 days by the end of October.
- New Mission The second mission is launched in Hunza Valley of Northern Pakistan. Bernadette Baird-Zars, a Fulbright Student in Aleppo, Syria, (who is volunteering for a project) requested another mentor and Carlisle Haworth, a GISCorps volunteer from California has been selected for this mission. Carlisle will assist Bernadette in porting several ArcGIS feature classes to the Google Earth environment.
- Mission in Progress This mission is in partnership with American Association for Advancement of Sciences (AAAS). Five of our volunteers (Peggy Wu from Pennsylvania, Brian Mladenich, from Oregon, Megan Winnenberg from Ohio, Nicholas Hauk from Calgary, and Ryan Kemna from New Hampshire) have been working on a project in Darfur region from their homes and offices in the past few weeks. They have already geo-coded numerous locations of atrocities in that region. The mission just entered its second phase.
- Mission in Progress in partnership with HealthCare Volunteers (HCV). GISCorps volunteer Martin Dresen from Germany has been working with HCV on geo-coding a variety of locations. This information will be ultimately loaded onto Google Earth.
- Mission in Progress in partnership with International Center for Health and HIV/AIDS (ICHHA).

You can read more about these projects at: http://www.giscorps.org/proj_opp.php

URISA Announcements

Upcoming Conferences

- URISA Leadership Academy
 December 5-7, 2007 New Orleans, LA
- 12th Annual GIS/CAMA Technologies Conference February 25-29, 2008 - New Orleans, LA
- URISA/NENA Addressing Conference (formerly known as the Geospatial Integration for Public Safety Conference April 7-10, 2008 - Portland, OR
- URISA's 4th Caribbean GIS Conference August 25-29, 2008 - Grand Cayman
- URISA's 46th Annual Conference October 7-10, 2008 - New Orleans, LA

What's New

- URISA and NENA Announce New Name for Joint Conference
- URISA Accepting Abstract Submissions for Fourth Caribbean GIS Conference
- 45th Annual URISA Conference Highlights
- Latest URISA Salary Survey Now Available

URISA's 45th Annual Conference

URISA's 45th Annual Conference was held in Washington D.C. in August 2007. Several GISCorps activities were held at the conference. To see some photos from the event, please visit the website at: http://www.giscorps.org/news/urisa_07_photos.html

Shop for GISCorps Stuff!!

Do you find yourself in need of a new T-shirt, coffee mug, ball cap or tote bag? Do you want to advertise GISCorps and your association with the organization? Well, you are in luck! You can now find various GISCorps items at our online shop at:

http://www.cafepress.com/giscorps

GCCDS Mission

GISCorps Volunteer teaches GIS to Gulf Coast Community Design Studio team in Biloxi, MS

By Christine Cerqueira Gaspar, GCCDS

The Gulf Coast Community Design Studio (GCCDS) is a nonprofit organization, affiliated with the Mississippi State University College of Architecture, Art + Design, and established soon after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast. Working primarily in Biloxi, in close partnership with the East Biloxi Coordination, Relieve & Redevelopment Agency, and a host of volunteer construction organizations, GCCDS provides

architectural design and community planning services to those recovering from and rebuilding after Katrina.



Pictured from left: David Allen, Kristen Zeiber, Sara Naughton, James Wheeler, Jessie Zenor, and Christine Cerqueira Gaspar.

Throughout the two years since Katrina, GCCDS has conducted periodic assessments of the housing and structures in East Biloxi, a low-income community in which over 90% of the buildings were inundated with water during the storm. In the summer of 2007, GCCDS undertook its most comprehensive assessment to date, using volunteers to canvass every parcel of land in East Biloxi, recording not only visual information but conducting interviews with as many residents as possible. The result, over 5,000 data points with a score of related attributes, was entered in an Excel database. GIS software was available to us, through the university, but our capacity to analyze the data was limited, and most of the staff lacked any experience with GIS whatsoever.

Faced with this challenge, I began to look for ways to build our capacity, as an organization, to process this kind of information and encourage each staff member to find ways to explore the data. I first contacted a former professor at MIT, from whom I had first learned GIS. He told me about GISCorps and suggested I contact them. Within a few days, Shoreh Elhami was hard at work to identify a GIS professional who could help us. Less than two months later, David Allen of Euless, Texas, joined us in Biloxi.

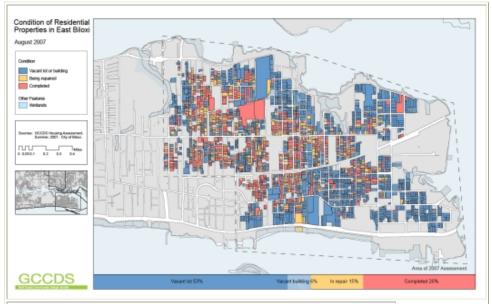


Figure 1: A status map created by GCCDS team after the training

Before David had even arrived, boxes of books appeared on our doorstep. David had convinced ESRI and the South Central Arc User Group to donate several copies each of various text and reference books to our studio. He later would also provide us with copies of his own manuscript. David is a gifted instructor, and during his four days with us, he not only got every one of the five staff members participating in the tutorial to be competent in the software, but he also got everyone excited about its capabilities. By day three we were all working on our own analyses of the housing assessment data we had been collecting all summer. Within a week after David left, we produced a score of maps showing the latest information, and showing the changes in East Biloxi since the first assessment in May of 2006.

From early on, the usefulness of GCCDS's work to the community of East Biloxi has stemmed from our capacity to provide information that helps articulate the conditions on the ground, both to those working to improve those conditions, and to those who might fund such efforts. Prior to their assistance, we had one staff member with limited knowledge of ArcGIS; now we have five people capable of producing useful, timely maps. The generous contribution of time and resources of GISCorps and David Allen have radically increased our capacity not only to produce maps, but to analyze the data we collect and put it in front of our partners in meaningful ways.

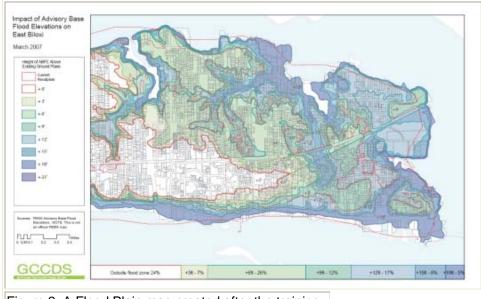


Figure 2; A Flood Plain map created after the training

Critically, the fast response time of the Shoreh and David allowed us to generate our maps in time to share them with the media and various guests that arrived for the events commemorating the 2-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. We will share our work with dozens of other nonprofits, and the impacts will ripple out across the Gulf Coast community. This experience is the very definition of capacity-building.

"The students at GCCDS were very eager to learn this technology, and were immediately applying it to their data to make maps. Before I left, they had each produced a map on their own that showed something about the data that was not previously apparent.... We all watch the news and see the tsunamis, the forest fires, the hurricanes, the floods, and naturally want to do something to help. The GISCorps is giving us the opportunity to take our unique skill set as geospatial analysts to the heart of a problem and impact the way problems are solved."

David Allen, GISCorps Volunteer