

ITAC Conference Call July 19, 2013

Attendance:

Scott Gain
Michael Lewis
Nate Booth
Terri Moore
Kris Lund

Bob Avery
Pete Cinotto (joined late)
Kate Flynn
Dane Ohe
Gary Krammes

David McCulloch
Gary Fisher
Kristina Bush
Kim Martz

Agenda:

- Summer meeting
- Discuss agenda topics for next 2-day meeting
- Update of Action Items
- Other business

Minutes:

Summer Meeting –

The call began with discussion of ITAC's summer meeting – do we try and have a face-to-face or a virtual meeting sometime in August? The general indication from ITAC is that August is a busy time. We should have a Doodle poll to determine everyone's availability.

Agenda topics –

Programmer's forum – ITAC needs Pete's input. We are not sure where we stand with this. Terri commented that we've heard about it, but she has received comments from Centers asking about the forum. We need to see progress. What is the goal of the forum? Scott commented that the issue of conformity may relate to the lack of progress. Bob Avery took an **ACTION** to talk with Steve Predmore.

Pete joined the call late due to another commitment. Scott asked if there is more to be said on this topic. What can ITAC do? Pete responded that he is not sure of the value coming out of this effort and referenced Kate's previous comments on earlier attempts at similar forums. Programmers in different centers are developing code but are unaware of what others are doing. The intent is to get more eyes involved and increase collaboration. There are tools such as GITHUB processes and FIMI that are helping. There is more collaboration now than when the idea was first brought up.

Terri asked if there is a place where WSCs can go to get information about these tools – a web site or SharePoint site. Pete responded that we have the GITHUB which is USGS approved. Nate commented that there is some overlap with CDI, and that this is a worthwhile topic. We need to decide on the best approach to move forward. There is no recipe to use. Further discussion would be good.

Scott added that computer moderated collaboration is interesting. Part of the issue is how to get people in remote areas to collaborate. David McCulloch commented that folks like Pete were trying to find talent in USGS and develop a "clearinghouse" for code, etc. Kate commented that this type of effort takes a commitment of resources over time and historically, managers have not been willing to make that commitment.

Pete responded that initially he saw the forum as a way for folks to communicate with each other; it would foster collaboration across centers, top programmers might "float to the top," and other programmers might have the opportunity to improve their skills. Scott responded that we have identified that the need for the forum is still there, but as Kate pointed out, this effort will not maintain itself. We need to decide how formal the effort will be and how to promote informal collaboration. Nate acknowledged that this is a worthy cause and suggested that he and Pete talk offline. An update will be given on our next call.

Stream View – Nate commented that he challenged Jared Criscuolo to have something to show ITAC by the end of July, and Jared is up to that challenge. Terri commented that it will be good to see what Jared has done.

Cloud Hosting – Terri commented that the Department has indicated a solution will be announced at the end of July / early August. Terri hopes to have more information for the next call.

Mobile Applications Framework – Terri noted that she has contacted Lorna Schmid to see if Lorna can update ITAC. Terri added that Rich Frazier briefed that the framework is a done deal. It would be good to get an update.

Archiving Electronic Data – Kate got an update from Jim Kolva. He reported that the group has met three times and they have a tentative structure and naming convention in place. The group is making progress. Terri asked if there is any anticipation that a policy memo will be put out. Kate responded that she is not sure of a timeframe. Kate can follow-up with Jim to find out what the goals of the group are.

Inventory of geotagged photos – Gary Fisher commented that he and Shaun Wicklein are interested in this effort. Gary noted that in the field, thousands of photos are taken. Some are geotagged and some are not. How do we approach cataloging all of these photos? Gary expressed further interest in talking to Nate about this – has CIDA done anything like this? Nate asked if there has been any flexibility or opportunity to use other parts of Bison Connect to use Picasa. Gary responded no, but that was before we were using Bison Connect. Terri took an **ACTION** to talk to Paul Exter about the use of Bison Connect.

AQUARIUS - Nate suggested an update on AQUARIUS (as related to site visit)

Data center reduction – Can ITAC help build a common science computing profile (business model identifying the impacts of closing data centers)? The idea is to have ITAC be a body to identify science areas that are supported. Nate commented that WSCs are nervous about the impacts of IT consolidation on SA staff. Scott commented that it is a good idea to discuss this and react. Are there draft proposals we can refer to? Terri commented that the Department might outline what they want to know in a template.

- What systems are supported? The Department doesn't know this. Staff will be looked at when hosting centers are set up.
- We need to make it clear that SAs are mission essential staff supporting mission essential systems.

Nate – this is two-fold. From the Department's standpoint, it's an uncomfortable position. We will need to identify/detail what our IT staff does. We have to do this, and we must communicate effectively. Identify capabilities in centers and better leverage these capabilities across the nation (for example, high end computing, LIDAR data processing). Nate commented that he thinks the programming forum may fit here as well. How can we help that group be more productive and rally around regional and national projects?

Web resources -- Terri asked about the web resources issue that ITAC has tried to address in the past. Did we remove this from our list of action items? ITAC responded yes.

Two-factor authentication and waivers -- Terri – another IT issue that has been raised is with two-factor authentication. 70-80 waivers were from Water. Terri commented that she is curious why centers are not using their smart cards in the field. Terri asked if anyone has gotten feedback, and if so, to let her know. The Department does not want to sign off on waivers, and we can no longer approve them as USGS.

- Kris Lund commented that there is a concern that when techs are in the field, that they will lose their card. Terri asked if techs are aware that they do not have to leave the card in the laptop. Kris added that if the card is lost, IA staff have to travel far to replace the card as there is no credentialing center located close by.
- Bob Avery added that there are some application conflicts. **ACTION** – Bob and Kris will send comments to Terri.
- Terri commented that the focus will be on centers consistent with waivers. She will work with Paul to put in a business case for those centers.
- Michael asked if there is an obvious clustering for the waivers with Terri responding yes (Iowa, New Jersey...)
- Scott asked if the issue pertains to eRAS or with general use with eRAS being the response. Scott added that there is great variability in how centers enter and process their data – there is disarray with data entry. In Tennessee, for example, they do not have to log in to the network as is the case in other centers.
- Scott made a suggestion to move toward a webinar with the goal of bringing cohesion / uniformity to data entry. Nate added that this would be good to include in the AQUARIUS and NWIS Vision discussions. Dane noted that phase 3 of the Vision will address data input. Terri suggested that Joe Nielsen and Burl Goree update ITAC.
- Kris added that this also relates to electronic data archiving and the need for policy.

Field Computing – Nate suggested adding field computing to the agenda. He has been approached about putting a comprehensive system together to bring everything together. There is a new White House mandate – Open Data Policy (reference <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2013/m-13-13.pdf>)

3 components:

- o Open Data policy
- o IPDS – helps organize reports in relation to our datasets
- o Websites may be a new sanctioned report series – this will have a lot of policy implications
 - websites are becoming an alternative to traditional publication series

ACTION – Terri will check with Keith Kirk about an update to ITAC once we have selected dates for the meeting.

Supergages – Nate asked if the idea of supergages (which would be a multidisciplinary effort) has ever been a topic for ITAC. Nate added that in Wisconsin, there is an active set of folks running novel programs with Campbell Scientific Software, and he assumes that

other WSCs are doing this as well. This fits in with the programmer's forum as well. Terri asked if Nate if he knows of someone that can give a presentation to ITAC. Nate responded that we can line someone up to give a talk.

Web programming issues – Michael asked about web programming issues that centers may be having, noting that the IA WSC has not adopted the look and feel of the GA WSC. Terri commented that this has been on the agenda before – how do we get information out to the field. She added that it might be good to bring this up with the Office of Communications. Nate commented that this issue also fits in with the programmer forum in terms of both content and scripting. Nate added that it might be worth hearing from the Web staff. Michael suggested that Howard Perlman be included in the discussion. Scott commented that this sounds like something ITAC might be able to do through an ITAC sponsored web-based workshop. Scott added that sometimes bringing people together gets an idea going. Nate responded that this is a workforce issue. USGS is behind with modern ways of doing information delivery. We can make the case scientifically that IT is more than “wires and pliers.”

Mobile computing – Gary suggested a quick update.

List of Agenda Topics –

- Programmers forum
- Stream View – presentation from Jared Criscuolo (?)
- Cloud hosting - Terri
- Mobile Applications Framework – Lorna
- Inventory of geotagged photos
- AQUARIUS update – Joe Nielsen
- Reduction of the number of data centers – business case for identifying the impacts to WSCs
- Two-factor authentication and WSC waivers
- Field computing update
- Supergages
- Paul Exter
 - o ITT Update (will include Hosting)
 - o USGS/DOI initiatives to Centers, and how ITAC can assist in completion
 - o Vulnerability Reports

Review/update of Action Items –

Updates from today's discussions will be posted to the ITAC SharePoint site.

Next Call – August 21, 2013

Scott noted that ITAC talked about having a virtual meeting with a Center. Is it a good idea to consider Wisconsin/CIDA at this point given the potential agenda topics? Would a videoconference with Wisconsin be good? Nate commented that the center is not set up for videoconferencing. Kate commented that some topics may not translate well over the Web or through other technologies. ITAC may need to have a face-to-face meeting to be more effective. Terri asked about the potential to do a face-to-face meeting given that a lot of the topics and presenters are located in Wisconsin. Nate commented that he feels that he can pursue a face-to-face meeting given the list of topics we have discussed. We should do a Doodle poll first.

ACTION – Set up a Doodle poll to determine best dates for a September face-to-face meeting.

ACTION – Firm up agenda for the August 21 call.

New Business –

No new business