

University of New Hampshire News Bureau

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COMPUTER-GENERATED MAPS TO HELP IN STATE PLANNING

DURHAM, N.H. -- A new partnership between the University of New Hampshire and state government has been launched around a powerful new computer program that will help state planners.

The \$75,000 computer software system, ARC/INFO, was acquired by the Office of State Planning (OSP), but is located at UNH's Complex Systems Research Center.

The system can create complex maps from almost any geographic data, such as topography, the locations of rivers or the boundaries of forests. It can combine different kinds of data, revise existing maps or make several small maps into one big one. It even can correct errors in the data.

"This system will help in planning for growth and development in a way that's in harmony with the natural environment," says James McLaughlin, senior planner with the OSP.

For instance, it will be used extensively in the state's \$5 million groundwater mapping program. Over the next six to eight years, according to McLaughlin, maps of the state's groundwater resources will be compiled, beginning with the Nashua region. Those maps, McLaughlin says, will "aid in setting controls on development and growth" in boom areas.

Another immediate use of ARC/INFO will be a pilot study of one New Hampshire lake to help state planners develop strategies to manage conflicting demands on lakes and their shorelines.

Eventually, the ARC/INFO system will include data on the state's geology, soils, terrain, vegetation, land use, wells and surface waters.

Staff at the Complex Systems Research Center (CSRC) will help the state manage the new computer program. At the same time, CSRC scientists plan to use the system in their studies of the global environment.

GSP and CSRC personnel will be the prime users of the new system during its first year. However, says McLaughlin, his office will consider requests from other organizations, especially other state agencies, to use the system in the future.

ARC/INFO was developed by the Environmental Systems Research Institute of Redlands, Calif. It is so sophisticated that, in addition to a six-inch-thick stack of manuals, it comes with an intensive, two-week training session.