



November 22, 2006

To: WLIA Board, LION  
To: All Wisconsin Land Information / Geospatial Data Producers

From: State Cartographer's Office  
Re: **Comparison study and recommendations for a land records survey in Wisconsin**

In June, the WLIA Board of Directors, and the Land Information Officers Network (LION) requested that the State Cartographer's Office (SCO) investigate and recommend steps needed to resurrect the WLIP's Annual Survey. Over the years, the Survey has been an invaluable tool to measure WLIP progress and growth. However, it has not been used for the past three years.

After studying a number of options, it is our strong recommendation that Wisconsin reissue the survey via a customized version of *Ramona*, a recently developed national GIS data inventory tool. The SCO is recommending the use of the *Ramona* survey system for the following reasons:

- 1) The existing WLIP annual Survey is based on dated code that would need to receive a major overhaul. It is sorely out-of-date, essentially broken, and has limited or no reporting capabilities. Using an existing maintained system would reduce overhead and maintenance and allow us to focus on populating the survey and enhanced reporting.
- 2) As a survey tool, *Ramona* satisfies many of the aspects of the past WLIP Survey, and many of the requirements we deem necessary into the future for state requirements and federal partnering initiatives.
- 3) *Ramona* will soon allow the addition of state-specific customized questions. This feature is the result of feedback from the SCO and others during a multi-state beta testing period and will enable us to add WLIP-related questions not currently satisfied by the existing system.
- 4) From data records entered into the system, *Ramona* features map-based reporting, the functionality to create basic metadata files and planned integration with state and federal program initiatives. These features are highly desirable, were not contained in past WLIP Surveys and ensure an additional level of commitment to system maintenance in the future.
- 5) The *Ramona* GIS data inventory is aimed at a wider audience, Wisconsin GIS data producers at all jurisdictional levels, enabling a more comprehensive view of where and how GIS activities are occurring in and across Wisconsin.

#### **Immediate action needed**

In addition to the study, we also developed a strategy for encouraging meaningful participation in *Ramona*. The first step is to recruit several teams of reviewers for WLIP survey questions to be added to the Wisconsin profile of *Ramona*. We are immediately sending out requests for help with this work. *If you receive a request or wish to volunteer in this effort, please consider helping us in this important effort to reinstitute a survey.*

We've included a more detailed account of our study, required assumptions and overall considerations leading to this conclusion. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have as this work progresses.

Respectfully,

Ted Koch  
State Cartographer

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# WLIP Survey / Ramona GIS Data Inventory Survey Comparison Study

## Background

Administration and support by the Department of Administration for the WLIP Annual Survey ended in January, 2004. A report to the Legislature in September 2004 from the Wisconsin Land Information Board and Wisconsin Land Council (WLIB/WLC) recommended that the SCO assume administration of an annual survey tool. While no official agreement or mandate was made to that effect, the State Cartographer was actively involved at that time, as a Board member, in the activities of the National States' Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) which was advocating for a nationwide GIS data inventory tool.

In July 2005, the WLIB was dissolved and the future of a state survey for programmatic data and policy inventory was still uncertain. In the spring of 2006, Wisconsin, with leadership from the SCO, was a beta testing participant in NSGIC's new national *Ramona* GIS data inventory tool, which was unveiled to the public in March, 2006. After initial publicity and presentation of the new system, the WLIA Board and LION made their motions in June 2006.

## Approach

To provide the most efficient means of surveying GIS data producers in the state, the SCO has worked to dovetail the intent and utility of the WLIP Annual Survey with the nationwide *Ramona* GIS Inventory System. The *Ramona* survey is an online survey already implemented to survey GIS data producers across the nation at the state, county, tribal and municipal levels, and use of this tool would allow for reduced overhead in survey administration as well as more focus on useful reporting tools.

In order to compare the functionality, audience and content of the two surveys at a detailed level, we had to outline certain observations, assumptions and viable strategy options with which to proceed. Below are outlined our assumptions followed by our findings and finally, with agreement from the land information community, our next steps.

## Observations

- *Audience:* All digital **geospatial data producers** in the state will be encouraged to participate in the *Ramona* survey. This is a potentially significant increase in participation, beyond the former WLIP Annual Survey, which was geared solely towards County Land Information Officers (LIOs).
- *Rolling Horizon.* *Ramona* is intended to be an inventory of complete, in progress, and near term planned geospatial data. It is intended to be continuously updated. In contrast, the WLIP Annual Survey was a snapshot at yearly intervals to track progress. *Ramona* databases will need to be **routinely harvested** to accommodate the annual portrayal of progress by theme in Wisconsin.
- *Local coordination:* Each entity that participates in using *Ramona* is strongly encouraged to **coordinate with all geospatial data producers within their jurisdiction**. For example, if several offices produce different framework themes within a city, a coordinated effort will result in a better profile of the jurisdiction's overall contribution.
- *Target content:* The intent is only to document geospatial framework layers, and other themes, **once** from the **primary producer**. So, again *Ramona* is different. If an agency acquires and uses soils produced by NRCS, but has not substantially modified the data set, *Ramona* is not for recording that your agency **has** a soils layer.
- *Description.* Because many of the *Ramona* elements are **metadata-derived** and feed back into a metadata template, some guidance in the form of a brochure or help documents will be required to get the best input (e.g. 255 character layer descriptions deserve a template to include most useful suggested content.)

- *Reporting Units.* There are still a few rough spots with how **Villages** are treated in the naming of selectable geographies: Towns as known in Wisconsin are not listed in the pick list. A village agency producing data can not currently list “village” as the extent of the data.
- *Other Extents.* In general, **other geographies** that might represent the extent of a data producer’s work (regional planning commission, watershed, school district, utility service territory ...) must be approximated by using either counties, cities, or villages.
- *Blanket Applicability.* Unfortunately, it is assumed that both **geographic extents** of geospatial data production, and **policies pertaining to individual themes**, are uniform across a jurisdiction. These are two limitations in the current *Ramona* which we will continue to advocate should be corrected in subsequent versions.
- *Sources.* Also unfortunate is that the pick list of data for all **sources** is identical; this lead to some obviously incongruous pairings with given themes.
- *Coordinate System Naming.* For Wisconsin, standard references to **“Wisconsin County Coordinate System (WCCS), Badger County”**, or the newly released **“Wisconsin Coordinate Reference System (WISCRS), Badger County”**, are encouraged. Similarly other commonly used Wisconsin systems, such as the multiple eras of **“Wisconsin Transverse Mercator (WTM)”**.
- *Further Guidance.* Several themes need better representation and clarification. Multiple records might be entered to describe **horizontal and vertical geodetic control**. For an organization that **remonuments the public land survey system**, clarification to that effect might be provided under the “townships and sections” theme.
- *Further Guidance.* There is no pick list for the **International Great Lakes Datum** of 1955 or 1985, but these can be entered in the “Other” text box.

## Future Activities

The Wisconsin State Cartographer’s Office will do the following:

- In cooperation with the Wisconsin Land Information Association (WLIA), and an organization of county land information directors (LION), design, publicize, and help populate the state’s online GIS/land information survey tool to collect GIS data status and assessment information. This information will be fed directly to *Ramona*, and summarized and reported for state GIS assessment and planning needs.
- Develop and implement strategy for comprehensive framework data theme documentation via custom-tailored support for non-participants and direct pursuit of information gaps. Imagery and elevation will be the first priority themes.
- Export metadata from the survey tool (when full FGDC metadata does not exist) for use in the WISCLINC state clearinghouse and Geospatial One Stop harvest.
- Export survey results from the state-hosted survey to the *Ramona* portal.
- Produce a detailed report on results of the activity.

USGS will:

- Assist in promotion of state survey tool.
- Assist in identification of data producers in need of direct assistance for information gathering.
- Assist in evaluation and reporting of results of the activity.

## ***Ramona* Project Timeline**

Timeline:

- Spring 2004: Last WLIP Survey completed.
- Summer 2005: WLIP dissolved, recommendation that SCO administer WLIP survey.
- Fall-Winter, 2005: *Ramona* Beta Test, Comments submitted.
- Mar 2005: Presentation on *Ramona* at WLIA Annual Conference.
- Spring 2006: *Ramona* Online Survey Released.
- May, 2006: First informal working group meeting.
- June, 2006: LION and WLIA Board motions directing SCO to have recommendations for proceeding by August, 2006.
- Sept. – Nov. 2006: Develop recommendations and briefings for reviewers.
- Nov, 2006: Present recommendations and participation strategy.  
Establish 4 Review Teams for *Ramona* WLIP Annual Survey feedback.
- Dec. 2006: Finalize additional questions for the Wisconsin Profile of *Ramona*.
- Jan. 2007: Deploy *Ramona* including Wisconsin Profile; initial focus on producers of Digital Imagery and Elevation geospatial data sets.
- Jan-Mar, 2007: Prepare map-based reports on 2007 Status of WLIP Framework (SDI).
- March-June, 2007: Establish regular *Ramona*-export, local-db-import of updated results for continual local clearinghouse reports.