

APPL, USDA Forest Service, US Geological Survey

Meeting on Map Sales.

April 2, 2008

Presented and Reported by Steve Baldwin

Black Hills Parks and Forest Association

For APPL

The meeting was arranged by Betsy Kanalley, Assistant Program Manager, Geospatial Services Group, USDA Forest Service, Washington office, and hosted by Karen Eberhardt of the U.S. Geological Survey, Geospatial Information Office in Denver.

Others in attendance besides me were the various persons in charge of Geospatial Services at each of the Forest Service Regional Offices and the Washington office and persons with the Geospatial Information Office in Denver.

For the most part, I presented the APPL position paper on map sales that was developed for the forum at the APPL convention in Denver as:

Discount

FS discount of 25% is lowest among the agencies, almost unheard of in the private sector, and creates an unsustainable business model for Associations, especially when combined with the requirement of purchasing in lots of 100 of the same price and the inconsistency of policy among FS offices.

Sources for maps

Associations are not clear of the Forest Service's commitment to USGS as a distributor of FS maps, and reiterated the convenience and financial benefit for associations to purchase through USGS.

Production, update, and reprint of maps

There is a problem with availability of maps, not only through the distribution network, but some maps are not updated and reprinted in a timely manner resulting in unavailability of some maps at critical sales times. This seems to be due to the lack of any kind of centralized control of map production.

Agency policies regarding the sale of FS maps

Inconsistencies are widespread among national, regional, forest, and district approaches to sales of maps to and by Associations

Recognition

FS personnel are not consistently informed of the Forest Service Manual (FSM) and of the FS-Association interface in the sale of FS maps.

Discussion items:

Distribution: Most agreed that the system of distribution through USGS works well and probably should be adhered to by all FS Regions. Unfortunately, at this time, that is only an *agreement* between the FS and USGS, not an official policy, so the folks out in the field are free to distribute as they see fits their local needs. It is also a financial consideration as the amount of dollars that they get back into their map program can depend on who they sell the maps to. They get less back if sold at discount to USGS. We (APPL) need a clearer understanding of how this works.

Discounts: They seemed sympathetic to our need to make more on the maps sales to justify the costs incurred in sales at FS outlets as the map program has to fund itself as well. This is set by policy and will have to be taken up internally for any changes to be made. The short run solution seems to be for us to be able to purchase all of the maps through USGS, in which case we would be getting a 30% discount from the \$10.00 selling price. This is still not enough, but a start. We also need to further address the uniform pricing of maps being dictated to us as pertains to FS outlets.

Production, update, and reprint of maps: We need to be more proactive when we have problems with maps getting updated and reprinted on a timely basis. Supervisors, Regional, and National geospatial people need to hear from us and our customers when there are problems.

Agency policies regarding the sale of FS maps: Inconsistencies from area to area are due to an old standing situation in which the decision making is done at the ground level and authority seems to decrease the further up the ladder you go. On many policies, districts don't answer to supervisors offices who don't answer to regional who don't answer to DC. It's almost impossible for the national level to dictate policy to everyone across the board. Again, this would require some kind of internal changes, but we can do a lot to boost that along by making our concerns heard to the right people and enough people.

Recognition: We need to do more to blow our own horn among the agency people about who we are and what we do and why. Most of the people at this meeting weren't aware of how we came to be in their midst and what our purposes are. Both at the APPL level and on the ground level, we can do more to promote our missions.

Follow-up items:

1. Work with Betsy on best ways to get the word out on who we are and how best to get our concerns heard by the right people.
2. Work with USGS and FS to get the distribution method generalized – get everyone on board with the “agreement”
3. Continue to work with the DC office of FS to get the discount policy more in line with reality and the uniform retail pricing policy.