

## **COMMENTS FROM PASDA USERS**

### **State Related Agencies/Organizations**

#### ***PA Emergency Management Agency***

PASDA has been an immense asset to PEMA and our GIS efforts for Public Safety, Homeland Security and Disaster Preparedness. I can think of numerous state agencies that have benefited from PASDA. They have also been beneficial to outside agencies and other states through their consulting and education efforts. I think that because of familiarity, we often overlook that which is right underneath our noses. PASDA without a doubt has been a critical asset to the GIS efforts of the Commonwealth.

Lawrence Smith

The clearinghouse is an essential element and contributor to cooperation and coordination of GIS efforts in the state. The clearinghouse is proactive, cooperative, and always willing to assist. The data, innovative applications, and the human resources, particularly Maurie Kelly, Chris Pfeiffer and Ryan Baxter, of the organization are invaluable to the Commonwealth.

Ed Burke

#### ***Senate of Pennsylvania***

PASDA provides valuable data and services to the Senate of Pennsylvania. PASDA's online data repository enables Senate staff to obtain files that help in our many mapping projects. In addition, PASDA personnel extend our capabilities by supplying custom products on an as needed basis. In short, PASDA's efforts enable us to provide better service to our constituents. Your work is very much appreciated.

David J. Brightbill  
PA Senate Majority Leader

#### ***Susquehanna River Basin Commission***

Maurie:

PASDA plays an extremely important role not only in GIS, but also with that of information technology needs for emergency preparedness and homeland security. A quick, reliable and a "one-stop-get-all" clearinghouse of geographical information is one of the services which PASDA provides the many users of this Commonwealth. PASDA has also responded to its users through several utilities such as the clipper/reprojector tool and metadata assistance to name a few.

Not too long ago, only a few agencies were capable of generating spatial data sets. These agencies were very reluctant in sharing "their" information with the user community. I strongly believe the formation of PASDA created the environment for the expansion of spatial data sets that we see today. PASDA set the standard for GIS clearinghouses among many state programs and I often said that PASDA's example led the way for New York's site. The sharing of geographic data sets through a clearinghouse has paid back data generators and users many times over.

The partnership between the Susquehanna River Basin Commission and PASDA benefits the water resources community. It's interesting to note that SRBC's GIS web page receives more "web hits" than any other page on our web site. The SRBC GIS web page serves as a gateway to PASDA's home page. Our partnership with PASDA has helped our GIS program to reach out to the user community.

The transfer of PASDA's contract from DEP to OIT is very appropriate and should be elevated to that level.

However, I am very concerned with possible cuts in PASDA's budget with this transfer. I can recall a very bleak discussion at one of PAGIC's meetings regarding the Governor's budget for GIS in the Commonwealth. We all know the importance of readily available spatial information to address emergencies and security issues and that the lack of adequate information can be catastrophic. I hope that those who decide on the final budget understand PASDA's history and the contribution PASDA has served and will continue to serve to the Commonwealth.

Robert E. Edwards  
Section Chief, GIS & Data Mgmt.  
Susquehanna River Basin Commission

### ***Pennsylvania Game Commission***

I would like to nominate the PASDA for an "Excellence in GIS" award. My nomination is based on two parallel reasons.

First is the accessibility of GIS resources to the general public, particularly those unskilled in GIS analysis. Here, PASDA's "Pennsylvania Atlas" provides the lead. This is an exemplary use of GIS data in that it makes this technology accessible to the public through the web.

My particular interest is in birds, and PASDA's "Breeding Bird Locator" made the large Breeding Bird Atlas data set available in to the public through the a simplified, address-based mechanism. This was innovative and had the potential to enhance the knowledge of the large population of casual birders in Pennsylvania, certainly more than a million people. This is an excellent model for bridging the gap between large data sets (breeding birds) and local interest (my backyard)!

The second track, and probably more important one, is access to large-scale data sets. Clearly the available of geographically referenced data is a major obstacle to GIS analysis. This

powerful analytical and presentation tool is limited by the data available. Here, PASDA has taken a proactive approach to this fundamental problem -- make data available simply (by download) and cheaply (free!). This serves the technical community. I personally have downloaded a variety of resources and find PASDA a ready source of information, particularly state-wide data suitable for the scope of my responsibilities. In a related capacity, PASDA has served me well by serving as the source for georeferenced Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas data, so that I personally don't have to distribute this material in bulk. This data access capacity has me, and clearly many others, more efficient in the growing challenge of information handling.

For these and other reasons, I strongly recommend that the committee select PASDA, as Pennsylvania's spatial data source, for the "Excellence" award.

Thank you,

Daniel W. Brauning  
Pennsylvania Game Commission

### *Department of Conservation and Natural Resources*

Great job in helping DCNR get Rivers Conservation Plans on the Internet!  
Great job in meeting with DCNR stakeholders to help them navigate the GIS obstacle course.  
Thank you for reaching out to and partnering with us and our grant recipients to help them achieve more than we could without your help!

Todd Stell  
Chief, Rivers and Conservation Bureau

### *Department of Revenue*

For anyone who has been with the PASDA project since the start, it has come a great distance, to the point where we are personally proud to be one of the original partners.

### *Historical and Museum Commission*

Over the past year, I've become acquainted with PASDA, its staff, and learned about its capabilities in assisting my agency in improving the management of our programs. Its existence as a clearinghouse for various kinds of data provides us opportunities to collaborate with others, both within and outside our agency, to define new relationships between historic properties, historical markers, archeological sites, and other historical resources. Currently, we are relying upon the advice and assistance of the PASDA staff to help the historical marker program locate and map over 1900 historical markers across the state. We plan to use this data to analyze relationships between markers and historic properties, to survey the subject matter and geographic distribution of markers, to provide travelers and tourists with better directions to markers and historic sites, and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our installation and maintenance programs.

In doing so, it has been a pleasure to work with the staff members of PASDA. Their willingness to provide technical expertise and advise our staff is greatly appreciated, and their enthusiasm in doing so makes working with them a pleasure. The members of their staff are a great asset to our organization and to all state agencies. Keep up the great work.

Alana Bubnis  
Historical Marker Program

### Local/Regional Governments

#### *City of Philadelphia*

I am aware that the PA GIS Conference committee considers awards for excellence in GIS each year. I would like to offer a nomination for Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access (PASDA), the GIS data clearinghouse for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. While PASDA has done an exceptional job as a data repository and access point for State data and metadata, it is their work with the City of Philadelphia GIS efforts that I wish to address with this nomination. During the past three years, members of PASDA's staff have worked diligently with various individuals and departments to assist us in many ways--from providing advice and technical expertise in creating metadata for many of our data sets to assisting us in our data distribution strategy and participating in GIS Day events in the city. PASDA has also worked to promote the GIS efforts in the city to the wider community and have informed us of State-wide and regional initiatives relevant to our operations. PASDA has proved both an invaluable technical and data resource as well as an invaluable human resource that demonstrates that cooperation and communication can benefit users at all levels--state and local.

Regards.

James L. Querry, Jr., GIS Director  
City Of Philadelphia, Mayor's Office of Information Services

#### *Chester County*

Maurie:

I just wanted to let you know how important PASDA has become to us and to what I see as the state of GIS in Pennsylvania. PASDA, as it exists, makes excellent fiscal and organizational sense for many, many reasons, only some of which follow--

- 1) It is a neutral, objective, cooperative location for key data stored "outside" of state agencies—which allows it to work with everyone and yet for the benefit of everyone—federal, state, and local governments and others.

- 2) It provides much needed technical assistance to smaller organizations, so they too can participate in GIS in the Commonwealth and provides the basis for cooperation among all levels.
- 3) It provides for that much needed "clearinghouse" affect where diverse data can be obtained quickly and easily through unique and efficient tools and applications
- 4) It helps to educate everyone as to the importance of documentation and "metadata" which is essential for easy data interchange.
- 5) I've felt all along that PAMAP should be stored at PASDA. It is the logical home for all publicly accessible data paid for by the state.

Peirce Eichelberger  
GIS Manager

Hi Maurie,

I just wanted to let you know how much we value the on-going operation of PASDA and the value that it brings to our operations and the public we serve. We constantly rely on PASDA as a resource for our GIS since it serves as an essential portal allowing us to obtain data and also to make our data available to the public. In addition your online mapping tools and Clipper Utility are assets to us and other County Departments here in Chester County.

I often refer residents and students from our County to [www.pasda.psu.edu](http://www.pasda.psu.edu) as the primary source for GIS data and related services in Pennsylvania. I have also been very pleased with the services that you and your staff have extended to our County such as presenting information at our County GIS Users Group and joining us at our County GIS Day Celebrations to show local students and residents the value of this technology.

I am also very pleased with the support that PASDA provides in helping to shape coordinated GIS use in Pa. by regularly contributing to on-going work in PAMAGIC and PAGIC. I know that these contributions have helped all practicing GIS organizations in the State to recognize the value of working together to realize the potential of GIS.

Once again I wish to extend my organization's appreciation for the support PASDA has provided over the last few years and hope that we will be able to rely on its continuation for years to come.

Sincerely,  
Thomas West  
GIS Coordinator, Chester County Planning Commission

Maurie,

I wanted to write you to express my support of PASDA and the resources it provides. The Chester County Health Department recognizes PASDA's importance in the success of GIS at Chester County. We have been able to acquire data quickly and efficiently for use in our projects and data requests. This efficiency has allowed our government (and I'm sure plenty of others) to proceed with programs in new and innovative ways. I'm unaware of any other

internet resource that provides such a robust amount of spatial data for the Commonwealth.

It's evident that use of GIS is growing rapidly in both public and private sectors. It would seem to me that PASDA will play an ever important role in providing a valuable resource for spatial data acquisition at the local/regional level in Pennsylvania.

Best Regards,

Ben Aller  
GIS Analyst  
Chester County Health Department

### *Southwest Pennsylvania Commission*

PASDA is a 24/7/365 resource for GIS information. PASDA is like having an extra staff person at all times. You folks are doing a fantastic and much appreciated job.

Kirk Brethauer  
SPC

### *Monroe County Planning Commission*

We use PASDA on a weekly basis. We point our municipalities to your site for data and metadata. This is an **excellent** resource and I cannot express how much time I've saved with this available. Give them **more** funding!!

George Basila

### *Juniata County*

We are pleased to write a letter of endorsement of the PASDA program. PASDA has been committed in its support of assisting agencies, organizations, and individuals in enhancing the environment and communities within our county and surrounding area. The need for this type of resource and it's accessibility is continuously growing, not only for the public, but for the various agencies and organizations that make use of available data to make more thorough decisions on issues that will affect our environment and planning. We have benefited greatly from our relationship with PASDA and look forward to future endeavor's with you.

Bob Kratzer

### *Carbon County*

Dear Maurie,

I am writing this letter in regards to our metadata training class with Chris Pfeiffer. He and PASDA warrant our thanks. At this time I would like to say that the Carbon County GIS Department looks forward to continuing to work with you and your staff and to PASDA as a repository for our data.

Larry Stawiarski

### ***Lancaster County***

Thank you so much for providing us with services. The information you created for Lancaster GIS are invaluable to the County of Lancaster and to all others who use our land-based GIS information. Though we realize the importance of having good metadata information, we would not have been able to create the FGDC compliant metadata for all our data layers without your help. PASDA is a great resource for GIS users in Pennsylvania. Keep up the good work.

Herman Whiteman, Jr.  
Director

PASDA provides a needed service. Very useful in teaching. Metadata service is critical to successful GIS in the Commonwealth.

Jay Parrish

### ***Allegheny County***

Chris,

Thank you again for the education you provided us last week. We have had a great response from the attendees. This should be a great step towards the community idea of sharing data. Please also keep us informed on programs that PASDA is offering. We certainly appreciate all of the help that PASDA offers the GIS community.

Sincerely,

James M Frank Jr., Manager, Geographic Information Systems, Allegheny County

### ***Delaware River Basin Commission***

The meeting of the four Delaware River Basin states' GIS clearinghouse personnel was held at the DRBC offices in West Trenton, NJ. This proved to be an excellent opportunity for an exchange of information on how each state is addressing standardization of GIS data and maintenance of metadata. We appreciate the time that the PASDA staff contributed and especially the efforts of Maurie Kelly for initiating the process.

Warren Huff  
Director of Information Services

***Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission***

PASDA is the best source for GIS data for PA.

John Dubrowsky  
SAPDC

***Susquehanna Economic Development Commission (SEDA-COG)***

PASDA is an excellent resource. Every state should have a clearinghouse like this. PASDA is a very valuable resource to SEDA-COG and its 11 member counties and their municipalities. SEDA-COG uses the PASDA website almost daily in our projects. The staff of PASDA has been very cooperative and helpful. PASDA is an important service to the growing GIS community in Pennsylvania.

Tom Bresenhan,  
SEDA-COG

***Philadelphia Center City District***

PASDA provides an invaluable resource that helps governments, businesses and education facilities (just to name of few) reduce costs, improve efficiency and productivity. With the access of a wide range of data available, people who use geospatial technology are able to provide key resources for important decisions.

The staff who work at PASDA are all dedicated to providing the Commonwealth with innovative ways of distributing data and the education of its citizens of all ages.

As a user of PASDA data, I have found obtaining data from their website has been invaluable for my day-to-day duties. One such example is when I was asked where were the emergency helicopter ports located in Philadelphia. With the help of PASDA I was able to download the file and present the locations on a map for the interested parties.

Andrew Hart  
Center City District  
Philadelphia PA

***City of Philadelphia GIS Services Group***

I attended a recent GIS Town Meeting and I wanted to take the opportunity to compliment you and your group for the work being done by PASDA. Over the past few years, we have worked with the City of Philadelphia which has undertaken an effort to document all of its spatial data.



This has been a huge effort, but Maurie and her staff have been extremely helpful along the way. In addition to all the work they are doing in terms of gathering, documenting and distributing data around the state, they have found the time to assist us with a long stream of queries and please for help. We could not have done it without them. This is one state effort for which I am happy to be paying taxes and I hope it continues to grow and prosper.

### *Bedford County Planning Commission*

Thank you for providing access to data and imagery, and SPOT imagery for Pennsylvania. The 2000 Census data will also allow our commission to review recent changes in population growth. We also seem to be doing more local planning efforts, stormwater plans, riparian corridor plans, and joint comprehensive planning. We hope we can count on your continued support in our efforts.

Frank Burggraf  
Senior Planner

### Non Profit Organizations/Watershed & Conservation Groups

#### *Slippery Rock Watershed Coalition/Stream Restoration Inc.*

Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access (PASDA) is a leader in the distribution of geospatial data. PASDA provides a clearinghouse of geospatial data created by a variety of federal, state, local and regional government agencies, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions throughout Pennsylvania. This information is provided at no cost to users. By creating a central repository, PASDA proficiently shares this data and prevents the duplication of mapping efforts. Thus, PASDA improves the overall efficiency of organizations throughout the Commonwealth resulting in a large cost savings.

Within the last ten years, the use of Geographic Information Systems has rapidly grown within the government and private businesses. The data that comprises these systems are costly to develop. Non-profit organizations, especially, have limited funds. Having a central storehouse and user-friendly web site, PASDA enables quick and easy access to hundreds of files needed for our work. This information would have been prohibitively expensive to collect ourselves.

Stream Restoration Incorporated is a non-profit organization whose mission focuses on the restoration of watersheds impacted by abandoned coal mine drainage. For decades, abandoned mine drainage has degraded streams in the eastern United States. By developing public-private partnerships involving industry, government agencies, academia, and citizen grassroots organizations, projects can be implemented quickly and efficiently. An interdisciplinary approach is imperative to address these issues. Multi-functioning passive systems not only treat abandoned mine drainage but also restore sites to productive farmlands or to wildlife habitat, increasing neighboring property values.

PASDA has enabled us to develop comprehensive GIS maps essential to watershed restoration and protection. These maps, for example, aid in the discovery and prioritization of problems areas within watersheds. In addition, PASDA has proven to be a vital partner to complete individual reclamation projects. To begin a project, a preliminary site investigation is completed. As part of this investigation, PASDA is utilized to review secondary data and to develop base maps. PASDA provides a wealth of information about project sites that previously could not be easily accessed.

In conclusion, PASDA has helped our organization successfully treat over 1 billion gallons of mine drainage every year. Fish are returning to streams that have been devoid of life for over 100 years improving their recreational value and potentially strengthening the local economy. Without PASDA, we would not be able to use GIS as a tool in the restoration of these watersheds.

### ***WITF, Inc./Explore PA History.com***

PASDA has been extremely supportive in the ExplorePAhistory.com project. Providing GIS data from across the Commonwealth (and over 300 historical marker coordinates) and working directly with myself, our content partner the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and our technology vendor Ripple Effects Interactive to enhance the site by making our vision of interactive maps a reality.

Personally, I think the project is a example of how organizations can work together and how projects such as this can benefit from having PASDA as a technological resource.

In the end it saved the project time, money, and effort. And now everyone benefits!

Flip Michaels  
Director of New Media  
WITF, Inc.

### ***Natural Lands Trust***

I would like to submit a nomination for PASDA to receive the PA Award for Excellence in Geographic Information Technology.

- \* They have facilitated the sharing, distribution and provision of available GIS data to the widest possible audience of GIS users in PA in one of the most user-friendly interfaces of any GIS clearinghouse across the nation.
- \* They pursue new data sources on an on-going basis - and encourage the development of new data sources to close known data source gaps.
- \* They are continually providing education about why GIS is a critical and important conservation and planning resource in PA - a very needed outreach effort.
- \* They are continually offering demonstration and learning opportunities to bring users up to a better level of understanding and technical abilities.

\*They are very interested and invested in supporting innovative start-up project that aim to improve analytical uses of GIS data and make that data available to end-users who will implement the results.

This level of support is very visionary and made the difference in our projects being just concepts vs. being real viable tools to improve conservation activity across the Commonwealth.

### *Clearwater Conservancy*

I am writing to express my appreciation for PASDA for your assistance with our Watershed Address Project. The completion of this project was hindered for several years and the assistance you gave us allowed us to finally accomplish this goal. For many it will be the first step in identifying themselves as citizens of the watershed as much as the town, state, and country. Without the assistance of PASDA, this important project could not have been realized. Thank you for your service to the Spring Creek Watershed Community.

### *Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers*

Dear Maurie,

I am writing at this time to express my support for PASDA. As Pennsylvania's statewide river and watershed conservation organization, POWR understands the value of a statewide repository for geospatial data. Watershed groups, municipalities, and others involved in locally based natural resource management need a reliable source for such information. We are glad that PASDA exists to fulfill that role and to provide assistance to local watershed groups about how to work with and submit data.

We certainly hope that you and your colleagues receive the resources necessary to continue your important work as Pennsylvania's geospatial clearinghouse.

Please feel free to share this with your funders. I would be happy to speak with them on your behalf.

Good luck with your efforts to continue your valuable work.

Timothy Schaeffer  
Science and Policy Director

### *Educational Institutions and Other Organizations*

#### *Shippensburg University*

Dear Maurie,

This note is long overdue, but as I was putting together a lab for my undergraduate GIS class--introducing them to sources of data and the use of PASDA--I realized it was time for me to let you and your group know how much you are appreciated!!

I am Jan Smith, I teach GIS and Cartography in the Department of Geography-Earth Science at Shippensburg University. I am relatively new to Pennsylvania, coming here from Georgia just three years ago. When I first started teaching GIS here, I asked my colleagues where I could find some great digital data for Pennsylvania. (I think it is important that my students use real-world data in their labs and I find they enjoy using data from places they know well.) A colleague explained PASDA to me and I have used your data and services ever since.

I was amazed when I came to your website three years ago, and I am continually amazed every time I come back. The list of available data continues to grow, the meticulous nature of the metadata is highly commendable, and the user-interface of your website is beyond compare. As you can well imagine, I am using data in my research and in my classes constantly. Without question, the PASDA website is the most comprehensive, well-documented, and easiest to use of the 40-50 other online data sources I use frequently.

My use of your data services goes well-beyond my classroom. I serve on the board of a non-profit watershed group, The Shenango River Watchers. Over the last two years I was able to put together a GIS for our organization, locating areas of the watershed that are in danger, identifying areas for clean up projects, and locating potential canoe and boat launch points. The group was successful in getting a "Growing Greener" grant in order to support our mission to preserve and protect the watershed.

I have also volunteered the last two years for the Butler County Library in Butler, Pennsylvania. They had a great need to create maps of all the townships in the county for their geneology division. I was able to create these maps for them from data available at PASDA.

My GIS colleagues in other states are quite envious of the resources we have at PASDA. Joseph Kerski, the GIS Education Outreach Coordinator for the USGS (United States Geological Survey)--constantly comments that PASDA is the best state data clearinghouse in the U.S. I am sure I am biased, but I certainly agree.

So, thank you and your group many times over. The services you provide online (and by phone and email) are simply incredible. Several times when I have needed assistance I emailed Scott Dane and he replied quickly. He is ever-friendly and helpful. I have also met Tracey Walrath on several occasions. I am active in a group which is interested in getting more GIS in the K-12 curriculum in Pennsylvania. She has always been willing to assist us as we introduce GIS and spatial thinking to teachers and students.

Again, thank you for the work that you do for all of us. I am sure that it is a challenge to serve a group of people who remain somewhat invisible and anonymous. I really don't know how I would be able to teach GIS and cartography, how I would be able to do my research, or my outreach to my community without all that you provide

Sincerely,

Janet S. Smith  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Geography-Earth Science  
Shippensburg University

### ***Londonderry School***

I am writing in support of the Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access and their commitment to assisting Pennsylvania. I have been teaching in Pennsylvania schools for the past 15 years. Over the past 7 years I have been using visualization technologies and in particular GIS with my 7-12th grade students. I have also trained numerous teachers to use GIS. Because of the tremendous interest Pennsylvania teachers have shown in the use of GIS in Pennsylvania classrooms, I saw the need to create a network to support the use of GIS in the state. With the assistance of GIS professionals, in particular the professionals at PASDA, a GIS Alliance was created to assist teachers and students in PA.

Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access provides relevant data needed by teachers and students. The GIS professionals have been developing lessons and technical training using PA data for our schools. They have made every effort to communicate with teachers about their needs by attending educational conferences and meeting with classroom teachers. PASDA has also been recognized by the national teaching community as a leader in providing relevant GIS data to our state. For example, at a recent national GIS teacher training workshop in New York, PASDA was included in the training as an example of how local and state GIS data can be shared and distributed. The teachers at the workshop were instructed to use the PASDA download procedures and to read the Metadata created for the data sets.

Personally, I have depended on PASDA for my class lessons and for major GIS mapping projects such as; the Capital Area Greenbelt, Creating an Invasive Plant Map of Wildwood Lake Sanctuary for the Alliance the Chesapeake Bay, an Inter generational GIS Mapping Project with the Pennsylvania Senior Environmental Corps and the Londonderry Green School GIS Project. Many of my students have used data downloaded from PASDA for Science Fair Projects, some of which have been displayed and presented at the Pennsylvania State GIS Conference over the past several years.

Finally, I have traveled to other states for teacher related GIS Workshops, Training and Conferences and the teachers from other states have commented on how lucky we are in Pennsylvania to have such a resource available to students and teachers. Just this last Summer, I was in Monterey California for a GIS Teacher Workshop at MATE and some of California's State GIS resource folks stopped by to talk to the teachers at the workshop about what they have been doing to coordinate their state GIS resources. When they heard I was from Pennsylvania, they told me that PA is the envy of other states, "you are very lucky to have such coordination in

your state and such a resource, it is going to take us years to get to where you are in Pennsylvania!".

Mary Pat Evans  
Science Teacher

### *Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

Let me go on record that...

PASDA is a noble operation in the best tradition of providing public data to the public. I believe it to be well run and the operation to be sound both technologically and fiscally. It has been a pleasure to work with Ms. Kelly and her staff and I believe she has the best interests of Pennsylvania at heart and instills this emphasis in her staff and how they perform their day to day tasks. IUP SSRC has submitted many data sets to PASDA and each time the staff were prompt in their replies and precise in their terminology; it really made what could have been a confusing process quite simple. I always recommend PASDA as the first place anyone should look for Pennsylvania data. I wish that public officials at the municipal, county and state level would all forward copies of their geospatial data to PASDA.

Dr. Robert Sechrist, Chair  
Department of Geography and Regional Planning

### *Kings College*

The Map Center at Kings College has used the services of PASDA for many years now and depends on PASDA for its data and services that are tailored to the needs of organizations with a Pennsylvania focus. PASDA has added functions that allow users to get tailor made data sets. Excellent stuff!! Maurie and her staff have never failed to respond to a suggestion, problem, or query from me. They have connected me where necessary with others. If budget cutters are looking in—look elsewhere than PASDA. This is state money well spent and it keeps Pennsylvania in the forefront of GIS.

The Map Center at Kings College

### *Capital Area Intermediate Unit*

My letter to you concerns the nomination of the Pennsylvania Geospatial Data Clearinghouse (PASDA) for the Pennsylvania Award for Excellence in Geographic Information Technology Award. PASDA has proven to be a valuable and innovative educational ally in the Teaching American History Project here at the Capital Area Intermediate Unit.

The Project seeks to assist secondary teachers of American History in the lower Susquehanna Valley in making the study of citizenship and heritage a relevant one for young Americans. The

Project introduces participating teachers to the sources of *local* history (societies, museums, historians, sites, archives, artifact collections, and participants in history) and technology that will improve instruction in the classroom by giving the often impersonal national history portrayed in textbooks a distinctly local and personal lens.

Fully aware that geographic knowledge and skills are intrinsic to the study of history at any level, the Project sought to marry current available technology with the individual needs of each teacher's classroom. PASDA willingly entered into the Project. Ms. Tracey Walrath and Mr. Scott Dane of PASDA brought their expertise to the teacher-participants in the Project and revealed the possibilities of geospatial data in the history classroom. In an initial informational meeting, the Project participants were dazzled by the prospects of population data maps of their own designs, of satellite images of local historical areas (in one case, a recent satellite image of Harrisburg revealed the route of the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal and the ingenuity of its designers in cutting off a large bow in the Susquehanna River), of topographical and climatological maps, and, well, the list goes on.

The major source of frustration for the participating teachers lay in mastering Geographic Information Systems technology and finding the time and instruction to incorporate it. Listening to their concerns, the Project Partners and PASDA established the scope of a two-day workshop at the Capital Area Intermediate Unit's Tech Lab for the purpose of guiding teacher-participants in the hands-on experience of mastering GIS skills and learning to create their own maps for their own purposes. This workshop, scheduled for the end of June, is merely the first in what will be a series of skill-based sessions that will help history teachers and their students discover the interrelationships of history and geography and take them beyond the confines of printed maps. Imagine the discovery of students examining the road network of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania before the signing of the 1954 Interstate Highway Act. What were the major arteries of travel? Why were interstate highways needed, if at all? How has the development of the Interstate System completely changed our lifestyles and settlement patterns? Key infrastructure questions are raised by such analysis, prodding students to the "why" of history rather than dwelling on the "what."

With GIS data, students and teachers have unlimited possibilities and may even peer into the future. Given current economic trends, what are the population patterns of the regions of Pennsylvania? Will the Northern Tier continue to lose population? Will the "Brain Drain" continue? Where will the Commonwealth decide to route its magnetic railway? Analysis of geospatial data will help to answer these and other important questions.

I can't begin to tell you how important the contributions of PASDA will be to the success of the Project and the subsequent education of our students. We anticipate many years of collaboration that will make a difference in education and in the future of the Commonwealth.

Jeffrey A. Zeiders  
Project Director

*University of Pennsylvania, Cartographic Modeling Lab*

PASDA is the source for best practices regarding how to organize, manage, and distribute data. It is the first place I look for data and the place I send others. We link to PASDA on our website and it is the one link that people really use. Keep up the great work.

ML Wernecke, Managing Director

PASDA has done a wonderful job of being the data clearinghouse in Pennsylvania. Not only have you kept abreast with technology, you have also provided access to excellent data for PA. Including metadata and standards has encouraged and inspired many organizations, including us, to document and create metadata. Keep up the great work!

Simi Octania-pole  
Director of GIS

*West Chester University*

Maurie,

Thank you very much for all the information you provided. You probably do not hear “thank you” very often, but my students and I would like to express our sincerest appreciation for your efforts. As you may know, we are an extensive user of PASDA and appreciate your efforts at expanding the service. Please advise me if there is anything we can do for PASDA.

Wes Thomas  
Center for GIS and Spatial Analysis

*US Filter*

It's my pleasure to write on my PASDA experience. PASDA Web site URL is one bookmark on my browser that I cannot afford to lose. I have used the PASDA site for more than three years to download public domain GIS data and metadata ranging from USGS DEMs to PennDOT roads. The site has a user-friendly interface that helps me to find the desired data quickly and easily. I use PASDA data to develop hydrologic models of the watersheds and urban drainage. With our high-speed T-1 Internet connection, most downloads are done within a few minutes. Thanks to PASDA, we no longer have to store large GIS data files like the USGS DOQs on our computers because PASDA site is just a few clicks away.

I thank the PASDA team for a job well done.

Uzair (Sam) Shamsi, Ph.D., P.E.  
Senior Technical Manager  
USFilter Engineering & Construction

*Wissahickon Middle School*



It is my pleasure to nominate PASDA (Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access), which is located at Penn State, for the “Pennsylvania Award for Excellence in Geographic Technology”. PASDA has been indispensable in our school’s effort to integrate GIS into the curriculum. In particular, Scott Dane and Tracey Walrath have provided critical, technical support through their partnership with Wissahickon Middle School. Both of these individuals have gone above and beyond the “call of duty” in order to advance geographic information systems, remote sensing and web-based mapping applications among young adolescents. PASDA’s support has empowered students to investigate and help solve local community issues through a constructivist, hands-on approach while also making geography fun.

If I were to list every time that Tracey or Scott personally assisted teachers and students or to comment on all the times that the PASDA site provided crucial information and data, the list would be simply too long for this letter. So I will highlight a few examples. Scott and Tracey traveled to our school in the fall to highlight many of the applications of PASDA for the entire 8<sup>th</sup> grade and help us plan for GIS Day. They also have provided T-shirts and motivational material for our students. PASDA also provided all of the data and technical assistance for students to create a GIS map of the Ambler, geocoding student’s homes, as well as a student project to create a flood map of Ambler. PASDA also invited our students to present GIS projects at several events including the official GIS celebration at the state capitol. We have also brainstormed ideas to make GIS more accessible to young adolescents.

The students have benefited immensely from PASDA as has our local community that is utilizing their GIS map to make timely business decisions. Our success with GIS in the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, which is due in large part to PASDA, has led to a district-wide curriculum plan to extend GIS into the high school. There are several other districts that have consulted with Wissahickon to implement a GIS program in their schools as well. In terms of critical thinking skills, PASDA has provided the data and expertise to make a transformation in the way students learn. Students now have the tools necessary to ask questions about their local community and answer it.

Here is the link to an article that I wrote regarding our success with GIS at Wissahickon.  
<http://www.mciu.org/mciu23/lib/mciu23/ims/interface/pdf/feb03.pdf>

Making geography fun and relevant for 13-year olds is not an easy task. And yet, this is what PASDA helped make happen here at Wissahickon.

Regards,  
Seamus Clune  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade Enrichment Teacher

### ***Paul Rizzo Associates***

I would like to thank you for your support and information that is available at the PASDA site. I personally have been involved in GIS projects and data research for the past 6 years. During these years, I have accessed the PASDA site for information hundreds and hundreds of times. I have used the information not only to support project planning for several state funded projects, but used the information for many other functions including community planning and grassroots environmental efforts. As the official gis data clearinghouse, PASDA has most definitely been a true service to the Commonwealth’s citizens, governments, and businesses. Other states should use the site as a model for similar access to their geospatial information. I applaud your efforts and encourage the new administration to continue to fund a tremendous resource.

Mark Antonik  
GIS Manager

### ***URS Corporation***

I am very happy with PASDA and regularly use it for coverages in PA. The sheer volume of available data is staggering and I can always find what I am looking for. I appreciate the complete, well organized, data clearinghouse!

Robert Earle  
Senior Environmental Data Specialist

### ***Talisman Energy***

I support mapping operations for our company's deep gas exploration effort in Appalachia. When we started in 2001, we had little or no experience mapping. We found the PASDA site through the Geography Network. This proved to be an invaluable find for us. I was pleased to find the wealth of data on your site and the convenience with which it could be accessed. The technical support provided by the PASDA team has always been excellent. Thanks again for making this amazing and free service available to the public.

Mark Dumka  
GIS Specialist/Exploration Technology

### ***The Whitaker Center***

I would like to nominate PASDA for the 2003 PA Award for Excellence in Geographic Information Technology. The staff at PASDA, including Maurie Caitlin Kelly, Tracey Walrath, and Scott Dane, have been working with the Education Department staff at Whitaker Center for the past year to educate the staff about the benefits of using GIS technology. During the past year, PASDA staff members have also been instrumental in introducing 33 teachers to GIS and how it can be integrated into their social studies curriculum during a two-hour long ArcView introductory session held at Penn State Harrisburg (Downtown). This session was part of a six-hour professional development opportunity focusing on the journey westward by Lewis and Clark was arranged by Whitaker Center for elementary teachers working in private schools. Other components included the viewing of the *Lewis and Clark: Great Journey West* at the Select Medical IMAX® Theater, visiting the temporary exhibit *Compass and Canoe* at the Harsco Science Center, and participating in select activities that could be used in the current school curriculum. The majority of the teachers in attendance rated the entire workshop very positively with the only criticism being that it would have been beneficial to have more time planned for the amount of information that had been introduced. PASDA staff also arranged for participants to receive copies of GIS for Schools and Libraries, version 5 from ArcView.

PASDA staff members were also instrumental in reviewing the lesson-plan content for a 45-minute hands-on, inquiry-based Discovery Lab titled *Information Station* that introduces 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to uses of GIS data. During the 2002 – 2003 school year, over 700 students were exposed to using data including topo maps, DOQQs, boundaries and water in order to solve a

fictitious crime. Students and their adult chaperones (including teachers) also were able to view the flexibility of using a program such as ArcView for gaining important information that governmental agencies and developers use in order to predict population growth trends and provide the opportunity to assess the challenges that may arise as a result of such development.

In addition, Tracey represented PASDA at *A View from Earth*, a special event day held at Whitaker Center's Harsco Science Center on April 12, 2003. In addition to utilizing ArcView to illustrate the vastness of information that can be analyzed by local officials to make informed decisions, Tracey shared with the guests of the Harsco Science Center examples of satellite imagery and GIS data that could have been used by the US military in the campaign in Iraq.

The willingness of PASDA staff to offer the high-quality educational outreach opportunities to students, teachers and the public at large is to be commended. I highly recommend consideration for PASDA to receive the 2003 PA Award for Excellence in Geographic Information Technology.

Sincerely,  
Lori A. Lauver  
Director of Education  
Whitaker Center for Science and the Arts

### *California University of Pennsylvania*

One of the most important components of geographic information science is spatial data. Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access is a network of Pennsylvania spatial data. Unlike other states, if one is looking for spatial data dealing with Pennsylvania, there is one-stop shopping, PASDA. It has made more individuals and institutions more efficient because of its one-stop shopping network.

The PASDA network includes spatial data from local, state and federal sources. All of the data on this network comes with its metadata. PASDA also offers training in data access, GIS, and metadata to name a few. They have also added important tools to help the end user. One example is the data reprojector /clipper. This tool allows the user to download specific datasets in the same projection even if that is not how the original data was set up. They have added different applications for Census and Watershed data. Finally, they have become an important voice in the K-12 GIS movement throughout the Commonwealth.

PASDA allows these individuals and groups to be more efficient. They range from individual people, government agencies, universities, and non for profit institutions. From a personal stand point, PASDA has saved me many hours of my time. The staff at PASDA is extremely helpful. No problem is too large for them.

Tom Mueller  
California University of Pennsylvania