



Ad Val Advisor

The Newsletter
for Wyoming
Property Tax
Appraisers

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Ad Valorem Tax Division Newsletter

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CAMA Project Q & A

The Department has been receiving a lot of questions regarding the Wyoming CAMA project. For this month's issue, we are going to try to answer some of these questions in a little different format.



Question: The number one question we are hearing is "How is the conversion going in Albany County?"

Answer: This is a complicated question on many levels. What we know right now is the hardware has been successfully installed at the county. This includes the server, PC workstations, pen pads and the thin client. Connectivity to the TerraScan application has been put on all of the appropriate computers.

This includes the GIS workstations in the office.

The majority of the data has been converted successfully; however, we are finding a number of little issues and data stragglers that must be corrected by TerraScan, the County or the Department.

As a beta-county, training didn't occur to a level we all expected. While each staff member has been given an opportunity to use the system, programming/development issues have kept the staff from receiving 100% of the training. This is definitely a downside of being the first to implement. We are currently making plans to augment the training regimen for Albany County.

Project coordination and communication issues are probably the most troublesome aspects of the conversion. Everyone involved has quickly realized the scope of the issues we are dealing with. It has been very challenging trying to keep everyone on the same proverbial page. To help with this process, we have implemented a daily project meeting that lasts no longer than one hour. This meeting allows each group to identify concerns and issues that are still pending. Also, TerraScan is in the process of creating an Internet-based question/answer list for the project. This list will identify, in detail, the issues being worked on and will be open for everyone's review.

The project schedule has been troublesome. From the beginning of the project, the Department and TerraScan have tried not to be married just to the implementation schedule. To this end, we have scheduled extra time for the implementation of the

beta-counties. As it turns out, this was a good thing. Based on the time it has taken to implement the first beta-county, the Department, TerraScan and the Uinta County Assessor, Kathy Ball, have decided to push the implementation of Uinta until the first week of January, 2004. This is being done to ensure that: **1.)** Albany County is firmly converted with all of the major issues resolved; **2.)** Accommodate the December holiday season (remember, even a two-week delay puts us directly in the holiday season); **3.)** Uinta County receives good quality and contiguous service from both the Department and TerraScan.

We believe these changes will help ensure the best chances for success without dramatically affecting the rest of the implementation schedule. One thing is for sure, the status on this conversion is moving forward with changes occurring daily. More to follow on this subject ...

Question: I would like to order replacement Pens and a Battery for the Pen Pad. How would I order these?

Answer: Probably the easiest way to order these items would be directly from TerraScan. Please contact Rob Sherwood at rsherwood@asiweb.com with your requests. If possible, please have the item name and part number available.

Question: Can we order our hardware early?

Answer: Yes, provided that you have read, signed and returned your Hardware Memorandum of Understanding that was recently mailed to you.

Question: I have digital photos of many of my properties. Will TerraScan convert these documents?

Answer: Yes, TerraScan will be converting digital photos that are prepared in a specific format. The Department is presently working on a data conversion standard for digital photos and will have that out to the County Assessors soon. Basically, we are looking for digital images in a JPEG format that contains the Parcel Number in the file name.

Remember, TerraScan can presently hold up to 99 photos per parcel. That should keep us all pretty busy for a while!

Question: One County would like to know if it is possible to have a copy of the TerraScan Wyoming Appraisal product on the TerraScan website so Wyoming personnel can play in it and learn more about the system.

Answer: No. According to TerraScan, they believe that this would cause a lot of problems. TerraScan is very cautious to opening up the software for general use prior to the county receiving training. They feel that their support network would be overwhelmed with questions that would be answered during the normal course of training.

As a possible solution, the Department is working on connectivity for the Division staff and we are in discussions with TerraScan over the issue. Our hopes are that we will be able to provide each Assessor a better look at the product during your winter meeting in January, 2004. We will keep you posted on what we discover.



Question: Are you really going to turn off my mainframe access at the same time you convert my data to TerraScan?

Answer: No. In this project, the process of converting data from one system to another is too complex to simply "shut-off" the old CAMA system. Depending on the time of

year you are scheduled to convert, your access to the mainframe will remain in place at least through the conversion period (normally 2+ weeks) in a read only mode. In those counties that are lucky enough to be converted during the height of the appraisal season, mainframe access may need to stay on longer with different levels of access available. Our goal here is to make the quickest transition possible from the mainframe to TerraScan. Overall, we do not want to let the legacy mainframe applications become a crutch for the new system.

Question: How is security going to be handled on the new TerraScan system?

Answer: When compared to the legacy mainframe CAMA system, the security model needed to successfully implement TerraScan is much more complicated. With the current mainframe systems, the State of Wyoming has been able to arrange for computer access, application access and could troubleshoot almost all network issues that would arise. Now, however, the County will assume more of these responsibilities.

The Department of Revenue and TerraScan are currently discussing the specifics of a comprehensive security model. Right now we are looking at the possibility of implementing a Hierarchical System. In this type of security scheme, a user's ability to view, add, change or delete data would be dictated by his or her Access Level. In concept, the hierarchical organization of security would allow an organization or person the maximum level of clearance (100%) to all aspects of the TerraScan application. This would most likely be a status given only to TerraScan itself. A Deputy County Assessor might have a 60% Access Level. This level might give access rights to all aspects of the county assessor's office, including those duties associated with field listing. A Field Lister, however, may be limited to a 30% Access Level. In this case, a Field Lister

would not have the ability to gain access to some of the Deputy Assessor's AA/CAMA functions.

Again, all of this is still in the planning phase. Once the Department and TerraScan have agreed upon the security model concept, we will solicit input from the County Assessors on how the model should be applied in each individual county office.

Thank you for all of your questions!

David Chapman
Local Assessed Manager
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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Special Districts Update

The Department of Revenue recently analyzed the results of our Special Districts inventory. As I have mentioned before, this inventory was based wholly on information available in our office. A committee within the Ad Valorem Tax Division completed the evaluation and determination of compliance for each district. Before the statistics are discussed, here is a little history and the current status of the Tax District Program.

Approximately 13 years ago when GIS was started in Revenue, bits and pieces of historical tax district information from the Department and entities were put together and digitized to form initial digital boundary files. Between 1993 and 1994, the Department received a surge of Special District information. These documents helped to clarify some of the district boundaries in question; however, a lot of information was still missing. Since that time, some districts have dissolved, others have been created, yet for some, the yearly requests for information have continued to be ignored. Although district information is required by statute, these documents serve a purpose for our GIS mapping as well.

These documents verify or identify problems with our interpretations of the boundaries. After verification, these districts are then assembled into County tax district maps. When there are not enough documents in a file to support what has been historically mapped, the result can be thought of as a virtual district and ultimately, a virtual tax district map.

It is the Department's goal to fill in as many gaps as possible with the Special District's files. While it has not been legally defined how the Department of Revenue will be able to help fill in the missing pieces of information, we are here to assist the Counties and Districts with any questions or situations that may arise. Also, if there is any information that could be exchanged between the Department and the Counties, that would be helpful as well.

The results of the inventory analysis are less than spectacular. Earlier estimates were very conservative. Statewide, the total percentage of Non-Compliant districts for 2005 is 69%. Compliance was determined strictly according to statute. The Conditionally Compliant and Non-Compliant counts were combined to calculate the Non-Compliant percentages for the Counties and statewide. This was done because the Conditionally Compliant category will not exist in 2005. The total number of Special Districts was 527. This number included every instance of a district, even when it crossed County boundaries. In the next few weeks, letters to County Assessors, Clerks and Commissioners will detail the specific results for their County, as well as a list of those who will not be in compliance for 2005. We will be sending a similar letter to the taxing entities with details about their district.

Sarah Sitterle
GIS Coordinator
Ad Valorem Tax Division

Ad Valorem Fall Class Summary

We had a total of 97 students that attended the Residential Appraisal Workshop this fall. The course was offered in 6 different locations during September and October. We want to offer a special thank you to Janet Montgomery, Rip Brandt, Susan DeWitt, Jerry Shatzer, Debbi Surratt, and Debbie Smith for hosting the class and setting up the classroom arrangements. They helped make the workshop a success and we couldn't have done it without them and their staffs. The Department of Revenue plans on developing additional courses and will offer them in the upcoming year. We will keep you posted. Have a great holiday season!

Jeffery B. Moore
Jack R. Rehm
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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Ag Land Valuation Study

The Ag Land Valuation Study meeting was held November 7th with the Ag Research Committee. The final version has been published and is being distributed to all interested parties on the mailing list. By the time you read this, you should have received your copy. If not, go to DOR's website. The study is located under "Maps, Calendars, Publications", "Manuals"
<http://revenue.state.wy.us/doclistout.asp?div=12&dtype=4&dsub=7>.



Should you have any questions please contact Jeff Moore at 307-777-5431 or email jmoore@state.wy.us.

Robert Eicher
I.T. Specialist
Ad Valorem Tax Division

Employee Spotlight

It is that time of year where we make an effort to give thanks for the things that are important to us. Although I have mentioned it before, I am thankful for this opportunity to share this information about the staff with you every month. For the seventh installment of the Employee Spotlight, we will be shining the light on another one of our seasoned veterans of the Ad Valorem Tax Division, Bob Eicher.



Bob started working for the Department of Revenue Sales and Use Tax Division in October 1977. In 1978, Bob moved to the Local Assessed Section. After working for Local Assessed, he then moved to the State Assessed Section. In 1992, Bob was asked to join the Mapping Section, which is now part of the Local Assessed Section. When asked about what he liked most about his job, Bob mentioned that he enjoys the ever-changing nature of working with GIS.

Before starting his career in Revenue, Bob was drafted into the Army during Vietnam and stationed in Germany for two years. Following military service, Bob took a job as a Clerk with the FBI in the Denver Field Office.

Bob was born in Goodland, Kansas, but was raised on a farm in Fort Morgan, Colorado. While growing up on the farm, Bob worked a variety of odd jobs until entering college. Before being drafted, Bob earned an Associates degree in Mathematics. After his service, Bob went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in Accounting from Metropolitan State College in Denver.

Bob wanted to mention his family. He is married with two adult daughters, one granddaughter, and a grandson who is on the way. In his

free time, Bob enjoys spending time with his family, and riding bicycles and motorcycles.

Favorite Movie(s): Matrix Trilogy
Star Trek movies
Star Wars movies
Romantic comedies

Favorite Food(s): Good steak
Good bowl of chili

Sarah Sitterle
GIS Coordinator
Ad Valorem Tax Division

Upcoming IAAO Courses

1/5/04 – 1/9/04

IAAO Course 101
Fundamentals of Real
Property Appraisal,
Casper, WY

7/12/04 – 7/16/04

IAAO Course 300
Fundamentals of Mass
Appraisal,
Lander, WY

8/16/04 – 8/20/04

IAAO Course 500
Assessment of Personal
Property,
Casper, WY

9/21/04 – 9/22/04

IAAO Course 354
Multiple Regression Analysis
for Real Property Valuation,
Casper, WY