

Expansion plans on track at EROS

By **TODD NELSON**

Argus Leader Staff

Construction of a major expansion to the EROS Data Center is still on schedule to begin next spring, a Sioux Falls economic development official said Tuesday.

The 61,000-square-foot, \$10 million addition to the center's headquarters is being built to store in an archives the data from satellites to be launched in 1995 as part of NASA's Earth Observing System.

The Sioux Falls Development Foundation is seeking financing proposals for the building now, foundation president Roger Hainje said. The foundation would design and build the expansion and lease the building back to the federal

government over 20 years.

Construction is expected to be completed by the summer of 1994.

The center's current 125,000-square-foot building was built and leased to the government in the same way, Hainje said. The foundation will turn that building over to the government when its 20-year lease dating back to 1973 expires next May. Property taxes are paid on the current building and the planned addition until the government takes ownership.

Hainje said the foundation helped attract the data center to the area and helped raise money to buy land it later gave to the government for the site.

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Committee OKs Landsat measure

EROS likely new archive for satellite data

By **TODD NELSON**
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A bill now moving to the U.S. Senate makes the future look even more certain for the EROS Data Center near Sioux Falls, an official said Tuesday.

The bill introduced by Sen. Larry Pressler, R-S.D., would extend the Landsat satellite program, make the center the national archive for the data from the satellites and phase out a private contractor that now processes and distributes the data.

Pressler's bill unanimously was approved by a Senate committee Tuesday and likely will go to the full Senate later this summer.

Gary Metz, acting deputy chief of the Earth Resources Observation Systems Data Center, said the center's staff likely would grow to fill an expanding role in processing and handling the data.

"Things are pretty secure the

EROS expansion. 3B

way things are but definitely the legislation is going to help us an awful lot," Metz said. "The thing it does, even in a broader sense, is provide for continuity of the Landsat system into the 21st century."

The center has been collecting, storing and distributing data from a series of Landsat satellites for the past 20 years. Researchers use the data to study global change and for other military, scientific and commercial applications.

Among other significant provisions, Pressler's bill would gradually undo the commercialization of the Landsat program that began in the mid-1980s. Since 1985, Earth Observation Satellite Co. of Lanham, Md., also known as EOSAT, has had an exclusive right to market Landsat images. Without

commercialization, the Landsat program faced a death threat from the Reagan administration.

Commercialization, however, has been regarded by Pressler and others as an expensive failure. Under the private contractor EOSAT, prices for Landsat images rose steeply, largely pricing academic and technical users and even some government agencies out of the market.

Under Pressler's bill, Landsat image market would once again be a government function, and images would be sold at the marginal cost of production, dropping prices from as much as \$4,400 a frame under EOSAT to \$400.

"The effort to commercialize the Landsat program has failed," Pressler said. "The result has been to drive academic, scientific and global change research users out of the Landsat data market."

Pressler summed up the illogic of

What Pressler's bill would do:

A U.S. Senate Committee on Tuesday unanimously approved Sen. Larry Pressler's Land Remote Sensing Policy Act of 1992, which would make the EROS Data Center near Sioux Falls the official national archives for Landsat satellite images of the Earth's surface.

The act left the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee unchanged and now goes to the full Senate likely after Congress' August recess.

It would:

■ Direct the secretary of interior to provide for long-term storage, maintenance and upgrading of a global set of land remote-sensing at the Earth Resources Observation Systems

commercialization.

"The current system now taxes citizens to fund Landsat, then turns around and charges them again to purchase data," Pressler

Data Center, 10 miles northeast of Sioux Falls near Garretson.

■ Direct NASA and the Department of Defense to establish an effort known as Landsat program management to build, launch and operate Landsat 7, which will extend the Landsat program into the next century. Such an extension has not been certain.

■ Instruct Landsat Program Management to negotiate with the private contractor who will build Landsat 6 to lower its prices for unprocessed data from Landsats 1 through 6.

■ Direct that Landsat 7 data will be provided to all users at the cost of filling their requests.

said. "The federal government itself subsidizes this data monopoly and then pays again to use the data it produces. This is a system in need of change."