



Bill Haines/ Argus Leader

Harold Joneson of Valley Springs drives two Percheron horses while Myron Joneson of Dell Rapids guides a plow for the ground breaking of new construction at the EROS Data Center Tuesday. Behind the two men are politicians and government officials attending the event.

# Tracking, mapping of Earth to grow in EROS project

Staff to increase by 150 workers after \$9 million center expansion

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**G**ARRETSON — Soon, through an expansion at the EROS Data Center, computer users will have the Earth at their fingertips, at least satellite images of it.

Officials broke ground Tuesday for a 65,000-square-foot addition to the center that's northeast of Sioux Falls.

The expansion will allow EROS to send photos of Earth to scientists and others through the information superhighway. The additional work will increase the staff of 300 to about 450 workers.

"We want to get so we can see where we're going and where we're taking ourselves with the environment, regionally and globally," said Dixon Butler of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The \$9 million expansion will be used to collect information for NASA's Earth Observing System, which will map and track changes in the planet.

NASA builds and launches the satellites that collect images of Earth. The U.S. Geological Survey provides the scientists and technicians who analyze the images to monitor floods, topography of the world and environmental changes.

The new building will be an expansion of what EROS, which stands for Earth Resources Observation Systems, does now.

The expanding Earth observation program will allow scientists to collect and store information at a higher rate than in the past, said Gordon Eaton, director of the U.S. Geological Survey.

EROS, USGS, NASA and Department of Interior officials, as well as the state's congressional delegation and Lt. Gov. Steve Kirby, spoke at Tuesday's ceremony. They followed the same horse-drawn plow used for the 1972 ground breaking of the first building.

The plow tore a long trench through the sod. Several hundred

employees, elected officials and observers also attended the program. A north wind made standing in the sun bearable.

Gil Haugan Construction Co. of Sioux Falls will build the addition, which will increase the size of EROS by 50 percent. The work will begin this summer and should be done by early 1996.

Sen. Tom Daschle said that if information is power, then EROS and Sioux Falls have a strong future.

"That dish is our connection to the world," he said, pointing at the huge satellite antenna pointed toward space.

Sen. Larry Pressler, who helped dedicate the original EROS building, said universities and other institutions worldwide will use the satellite images for research.

"Here we have an institution that's part of the United Nations, part of NASA and part of the future of our country," he said.