



United States Department of the Interior

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
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Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57198

IN REPLY REFER TO: OC 4-1

April 3, 1978

Memorandum

To: Distribution

From: Chief, EROS Data Center

Subject: Potential Merger of the EROS Data Center (EDC) with Other Organizations

I have read with interest the various proposals and minutes of meetings resulting from the deliberations of the Working Group studying the possibility of combining the Topographic and Publications Divisions into a National Mapping Service, and I am taking this opportunity to provide you with my thoughts on the EROS Data Center (and EROS Program) in the hope that they will be of assistance in your deliberations leading to decisions by the Geological Survey and Interior management.

When considering the possibility of merging the EROS Data Center (or EROS Program) into the proposed organization, I have one major overriding concern and recommendation as regards the Center:

Do not fragment the EROS Data Center, either functionally or organizationally. Maintain the Center as a single functional entity.

At the risk of sounding boastful, I would like to summarize what I think are the principal accomplishments at the EROS Data Center over the past five years:

- a. EDC has become a national and world leader in the training of resource managers and the transfer of remote sensing technology.
- b. EDC has become a preeminent national facility for processing and dissemination of remote sensing data.
- c. EDC has become a respected and full partner in the Landsat satellite program, with meaningful inputs to policy formulation and responsibility for implementation of ground data processing, production, reproduction, and dissemination.

- d. The EROS Data Center has become a recognized leader in the research and development of advanced techniques for processing and analysis of digital data.
- e. The EROS Data Center has developed and implemented comprehensive software systems allowing the creation of a national network of data ordering and inquiry facilities.
- f. The EROS Data Center has demonstrated the effectiveness of a government/contractor operation within the U.S. Department of Interior and Geological Survey.
- g. The EROS Data Center has been responsive to the mission and charter of both the EROS Program within the Department and the National Cartographic Information Center activities of the Topographic Division.

I cannot overemphasize my opinion that the cohesive nature of EDC efforts in data processing, production, research and development, applications, and technology transfer have created a mutually beneficial relationship responsible for these accomplishments. The EROS Data Center is correctly perceived by users of technologically advanced remote sensing data as a single entity responsible for providing data products and assistance in the use of these products, including the development of new processing and applications techniques.

A few specific examples of this mutually beneficial relationship are:

- a. Development of a knowledge of data product needs of resource managers derived from technology transfer and applications demonstration activities.
- b. The credibility of Center advice and recommendations when speaking as a single entity with expertise in data production and scientific analysis/investigation.
- c. The progression of Data Analysis Lab technology into the EROS Digital Image Processing System.
- d. The transition of locally created data base files and geobase information systems into comprehensive NCIC inquiry and order systems.
- e. The ability to explain to resource managers, during technology transfer activities, how to obtain remote sensing products and which ones are most likely to satisfy information needs.

In summarizing this key and fundamental concern, I am convinced that the above accomplishments have been a product of "the whole being more than the sum of the two halves" and that there are significant and overriding advantages in maintaining the EROS Data Center as functional entity.

I might mention for clarification that the relative level of effort at the Center as measured by both personnel involved and funds expended is approximately a 50-50 split for data processing and dissemination, on one hand, and for research and development, applications, and technology transfer on the other hand.

Of a more general nature, I offer two comments on the ongoing deliberations. From a review of the paperwork flowing from the Working Group, it appears that the issues are being considered primarily as consequences of various organizational alternatives, without reference to the more fundamental questions of mission and role responsibility assignment and funding implications. Most of the "advantages" and "disadvantages" being discussed appear to me to be, in fact, budgetary and policy oriented.

Also, from a purely practical standpoint, there must be compatibility of funding responsibility (including budget formulations, justification, and defense) and line management authority in any recommended organizational structure. It is extremely difficult to effectively manage an operation or function when funding responsibility and line authority are in separate programs, divisions, or organizational elements, even for a short time. It should be pointed out that the EROS Data Center was in a position similar to this early in its existence which resulted in the early difficulties of low employee morale, differences of opinion in the use of contractor employees, difficulties with organizational communication, production backlogs, customer complaints, etc.

In deliberating over recommendations leading to a decision on the organizational structure of the EROS Program and EROS Data Center, it may be that certain pending studies such as the OSTP FCCSET Committee study; studies on the Landsat-D ground processing system configuration; and recommendations for creation of the EROS Data Center as a National Facility for Landsat processing and dissemination; will all lead to intelligent and obvious decisions at a slightly later date. If the EROS Data Center were to abandon its role in processing and disseminating Landsat data after Landsat-C (no funding or responsibility for processing Landsat TM data), a merger into a "National Mapping Service" would allow increased emphasis to be placed on mapping, cartographic, NCIC, and data library activities. If the EROS Data Center continues its role with Landsat data into the thematic mapper time period and expands in charter to become the "National Facility" for processing and dissemination of Landsat data, along with training and technology transfer, the EROS Program and the EROS Data Center "entity identification" with Departmental and national resource management interests may be of prime importance.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Geological Survey and to the management of the Land Information and Analysis Office, EROS Program, Topographic Division, and Administrative Division for the continued support and assistance that has been provided to the EROS Data Center over the past five years.



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