



NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY
REGIONAL COMMISSION

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Mr. Peter Sforza, Coordinator, VirginiaView
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Mr. Rick Landenberger, Manager, West Virginia View
Department of Geology & Geography
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV 26506-6300

Re: Shenandoah Valley Pilot Project – Land Cover/Land Use

Gentlemen:

The Shenandoah Valley watersheds region, the counties of Augusta, Berkeley, Clarke, Frederick, Jefferson, Page, Rockingham, Shenandoah, and Warren, and the Virginia independent cities of Harrisonburg, Staunton, Waynesboro, and Winchester, expanded regional cooperation with regard to water resources planning in 2002. The Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission formed the Regional Water Resources Policy Committee and charged it with: a) gaining a better understanding of water resources and b) developing ways to more cost effectively respond to State and Federal requirements. Once organized, the Committee invited upstream and downstream localities to the effort. A map of the region and roster of officials is attached. A similar effort was started for air quality and is called SHENAIR. The USGS has also organized its Great Valley Water Resources Science Forum on the same footprint.

Good planning practice requires that all these groups analyze the historic growth pattern of localities and the region to ensure we all understand how it has been changing over time. The process is seemingly simple, but it has been made difficult by the lack of relatively uniform historic data which can be compiled for a time series analysis.

Peter's presentation to the Policy Committee about VirginiaView on December 14, 2004 made people aware of how the View's historical imagery data and programs might meet this need, as well as be a resource for current analysis and future monitoring. At the February 9, 2006 science plan development meeting, which Jim Campbell attended, the group discussed View's capabilities in more depth and conceived of the idea of asking the View programs to create a picture of the region's changes over time through historic aerial photography and the remote sensing data the View programs use.

At its February 15 meeting, the Policy Committee approved the Science Plan Committee recommendation to request VirginiaView and West VirginiaView prepare a pilot project for the Shenandoah Valley, VA- WV. Compilation of 1930's era USDA aerials, more recent photography and/or LandSAT imagery, would give a base from which to analyze land cover and land use change over the last 75 years at the regional, county and municipal levels. The data will also serve as a base for future monitoring for drought onset, water quality, movement of pollutants in the air, comparison of small watersheds for runoff after rain, and other analysis critical to the land based economy.

We hope you will agree to support our Committee's project. We have no funds, however we expect that this cooperative project will highlight the applications of your technology and thus help you gain support for the expanded use of remote sensing for analysis and management of resources. Please contact Tom Christoffel, AICP, Senior Planner, relative to how you wish to proceed on this project.

Sincerely

John R. Staelin, Chair

Enclosures

cc: Professor James B. Campbell, VirginiaView
Professor Timothy Warner, West Virginia View