

Federal Geographic Data Committee

Comments on National Telecommunications and Information Administration Request for Public Comment on “Privacy, Transparency, and Accountability Regarding Commercial and Private Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems.”

April 20, 2015

The Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) Secretariat offers the following comments on the National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s (NTIA) Request for Public Comment on “Privacy, Transparency, and Accountability Regarding Commercial and Private Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems.”

The FGDC is an interagency committee that promotes the coordinated development, use, sharing, and dissemination of geospatial data on a national basis. The FGDC provides leadership and facilitates coordination between agencies, governments, academia, industry and professional organizations in developing geographic information and technology critical to managing the nation. The FGDC Secretariat is located within the U.S. Geological Survey, a bureau of the Department of the Interior.

The February 15, 2015 Presidential Memorandum “Promoting Economic Competitiveness While Safeguarding Privacy, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties in Domestic Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems,” directed NTIA to establish a multistakeholder engagement process to develop and communicate best practices for privacy, accountability, and transparency issues regarding commercial and private UAS use in the National Airspace System (NAS). The Request for Public Comment notes that the multistakeholder engagement process is envisioned to include stakeholders from industry, civil society, academia, and other organizations with a goal of developing consensus best practices for utilization by commercial and private UAS operators.

Several FGDC partners and stakeholders have expressed concern about the potential impacts of new privacy-related regulations or statutes as they may relate to critical ongoing geospatial data collection activities. The FGDC, and its partners and stakeholders in the geospatial community, are very interested in participating in the upcoming multistakeholder engagement process to provide the perspective of the geospatial data and technology community and to provide input to avoid unintended consequences of potential approaches to protect privacy.

The FGDC sponsors the National Geospatial Advisory Committee (NGAC), a Federal Advisory Committee that provides advice and recommendations on national geospatial policy issues. The NGAC includes members from all levels of government, the private sector, non-profits, and academia. The NGAC discussed the NTIA request for public comment at its March 2015 meeting. The NGAC approved the following resolution:

RESOLUTION: The NGAC recommends that the FGDC work collaboratively with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to ensure that the geospatial community is actively involved in the multi-stakeholder engagement process described in the February 2015 Presidential Memorandum “Promoting Economic Competitiveness While

Safeguarding Privacy, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties in Domestic Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems.” The NGAC encourages the FGDC to work collaboratively with the NTIA to develop and communicate appropriate best practices for privacy, accountability, and transparency issues regarding commercial and private UAS use for data acquisition, while encouraging innovation and the development and deployment of appropriate technologies that benefit the nation and serve the scientific and economic missions of multiple agencies. The NGAC looks forward to providing input and suggestions to the FGDC to inform the multi-stakeholder process as it develops.

The Request for Public Comment notes that the NTIA will convene the first public meeting of the multistakeholder process in the Washington, DC metro area, and that the meeting will be open to the public and will be webcast. The organizations within the growing and vital geospatial technology community are key stakeholders in this issue, and we strongly encourage NTIA to include representatives of commercial, academic, and governmental geospatial organizations in the multistakeholder engagement process.

FGDC staff and NGAC members have registered to participate in the meeting, and the FGDC looks forward to collaborating with NTIA to engage the geospatial community in a dialogue about privacy issues and best practices related to commercial and private use of UAS.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Submitted by:

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Federal Geographic Data Committee

April 20, 2015