

BC Environmental and Occupational Health Research Network GIS Peer to Peer Support Group

Informal Minutes: October 10th and Oct 12th conference calls

Attendees:

Eleanor Setton (UVIC – PhD student)
Anders Erickson (UNBC – MSc student)
Sunny Mak (BCCDC – GIS staff)
Christine Ronning (Interior Health Authority – GIS/Analyst staff)

Regrets:

Ian Parfitt (Selkirk College – faculty)
Meghan Winters (UBC PhD student)

Members of the BCEOHRN are interested in developing a peer-to-peer GIS support group. These conference calls were organized to give interested members an opportunity to explore what the group objectives might be, and what activities the group might undertake to meet the objectives.

The following summarizes our conclusions:

Objectives: To provide a forum for members to discuss problems and solutions related to GIS and health analyses, to keep up to date on what each other is doing in terms of GIS/health research and analysis, and to alert members to upcoming funding opportunities, conferences, or other activities of interest. We did discuss other individual objectives, such as finding a one-to-one formal mentor, but we felt this was outside the scope of what this group might reasonably accomplish at this point in time

Meetings: Once a month, regularly scheduled conference calls with informal minutes circulated to all members of the group. There is also some potential to meet once or twice a year given funds from BCEOHRN.

Communications: Eleanor will continue to coordinate monthly meetings, and provide informal minutes in the form of 'Discussion Notes', otherwise there is an 'open door' policy among members re: emailing each other between meetings.

Discussion Notes:

Anders is working on an evaluation of aboriginal community health in relation to environmental pollutants. The ultimate goal is to undertake an epidemiological analysis. He will have Canada-wide community data and wants to look at how health varies according to the level of environmental pollution near each community. He is using the federal NPRI data. Someone has already done a basic analysis consisting of using a fixed

buffer (50km) for each community and counting the NPRI locations within each buffer. Anders wants to do some more sophisticated buffering, perhaps varying buffers around the NPRI depending on the level of pollutant released. He is looking for help getting his data into shape once he has it on hand, also for ideas for analysis.

Suggestions:

- Contact PHAC GIS group to get technical help as well as data for Canada (http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/php-ppsp/gis_e.html)
- Other data to think about – federal contaminated sites, dams (assuming methyl mercury in reservoirs used for fishing)
- Buffer ideas: use watersheds around communities instead of circular buffers, could use 1st, 2nd, 3rd order etc, to identify ‘near’ pollution emitters/sources, could buffer streams/rivers to identify contaminated soil sites that might be affecting water (would need some reason to assume contaminants leaching into water), watersheds (larger) can also function as airsheds to some degree
- Epidemiology ideas – populations will be small, may be difficult to support an epi study – explore possibility of grouping ‘unexposed’ communities and ‘exposed’ communities?

Sunny gave details on the upcoming 1st Annual Public Health Geomatics Conference to be held in Ottawa in early March. The conference is intended to promote GIS/geomatics for epidemiology and other health research. Exciting guest speakers are expected!

Action: We should make sure to publicize the conference to BCEOHRN members

Christine noted that in her area, there is a need to increase basic GIS awareness in the HA, and she has had problems geocoding health data in rural areas. She is also interested in learning more about epidemiology and surveillance.

Suggestions:

- There may be cadastral data available from local jurisdictions with residential locations and addresses that are more accurate than using a street network for geocoding
- Look at ICIS (<http://www.icisociety.ca/index.html>) for information on cadastral and other related data for the province of BC, although some of us have had problems getting access, and a few key jurisdictions are not included in ICIS yet. Requires an annual membership fee ~ \$1000.
- PHAC is developing online courses for surveillance and epi – Sunny will email the link to her

Eleanor gave an update on the ‘Population Health Data Access and Analysis Platform’ application to MSFHR. If successful, this platform would be able to provide some geomatics support to health researchers in BC. Anyone interested in details of the funding

opportunity should visit MSFHR website (<http://www.msfhr.org/sub-funding-network-platforms.htm>). Eleanor is also interested in finding collaborations for grant applications.

Suggestions:

- Make sure to look at BCEOHRN website for funding opportunities, and to send any not listed to BCEOHRN for inclusion

Other general discussion

- There is an interest in looking at water borne illnesses – is anyone looking at this with GIS? Can we develop anything around this?
- Christine will invite other Health Authority GIS staff to join the group (Brendan Mather VIHA, Genevieve Prudhomme FHA)

THANKS EVERYONE!!