

Problems with Land Records



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Accessibility

- Cannot obtain information
 - Unclear privacy or unnecessary restrictions
 - Related records cannot be combined due to poor classification, data arrangements, etc.
 - Do not know what data exists, where, what form it is in
 - Government specialists often don't know extent of available land information

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Availability

- Gaps in what is known about certain aspects of land
 - How are waters being used?
 - How is land being used?
 - Who owns what land?
 - Are all lands identified and assessed for taxation purposes?
- Decisions made in ignorance of facts

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Duplication

- Two or more governmental entities compile or maintain essentially same land records.
- Wasteful

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Aggregation

- Many current LISs assembled at national or state level with products provided to smaller governmental units
- County, town, and municipal levels - reaction is that state and federal products too general or inappropriate in scale and resolution

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Integratability

- Similar or related data described in different ways.
 - Latitude and longitude; state plane coordinates; river basin; etc.
 - Prevents records from being combined
- Historical separation of physical and proprietary land data

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Confidentiality

- Conflicting standards
- Unclear on what is or is not public
- Some information so inaccessible as to be nearly “confidential”

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Institutional

- Apparent mismatch between typically vertical structure of governmental institutions and horizontal nature of land records

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Wisconsin Land Records Project

- Research documented minimum annual government expenditures for compiling land records
- Wisconsin residents paid approximately \$17 each or \$78,730,306 in 1976 for information about state's 35,000,000 acres of land -- roughly \$2.25/acre

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Wisconsin Land Records Project Conclusions

- Land data collection should be at the lowest possible governmental level that has the technical ability to collect it accurately and efficiently
- Land data should be aggregated up from the lowest level to the higher levels of government.

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Wisconsin Land Records Project Conclusions (cont.)

- Standard-setting for land data collection and display should be at the higher levels of government, to assure effective compilation and comparison among jurisdictions.
- Each level of government - and each agency on each level - should be able to overlay or otherwise interrelate their land information
 - Mathematical geographic reference system

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Wisconsin Land Records Project Conclusions (cont.)

- Land information should be accessible and usable by all governmental agencies and levels
- One governmental entity on each level should be responsible for land records management and land information improvement.

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Wisconsin Land Records Project Conclusions (cont.)

- Publicly held information about the land should be easily accessible to citizens, under uniform confidentiality standards consistently applied.

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Criteria for Land Records Improvement

- Large Scale maps are needed for integrating land information
- Standard geographical base would make it easier to integrate land information
- Quality controls or standards are needed for information going into an integrated land records systems

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Criteria for Land Records Improvement (cont.)

- To be more responsive, land information should be accessible and decentralized.
- The land documents generated by the system need to be responsive to citizen needs.
- Land information offices should be both institutionally visible and stable

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Criteria for Land Records Improvement (cont.)

- Safeguards are needed to distinguish private or confidential information from public information.
- An integrated system of land information must have clear standards for collecting and recording data.
- Changes to governmental land information system must be sequential

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