

State Plane Coordinate System 2022

There are some big doings underway at the National Geodetic Survey. The word on the street is that we are getting a new datum, SPCS2022. I watched a video presentation posted on the NGS website about the future of state plane coordinates (ngs.noaa.gov/SPCS/learn-more.shtml).

Michael Dennis conducted two webinars in March and April about the subject, and there will be perhaps several more based on the level of interest. I understand there were 800 attendees at March webinar. The page above has links to both webinars as well as other white papers on the subject. I would encourage every surveyor to watch the presentation and get their snoots in the mix. The Feds are asking for our opinions and assistance.

As County Surveyor, I have the obligation of reviewing the work of others in an authoritative capacity. I see both proper and improper use of SPC projections. Understanding or lack thereof seems to be the culprit behind misuse. Just because the yellow box spits it out does not make the numbers right or appropriate. For example, what good is reporting acreage on the grid? Yeah, a surveyor can plug the reported parameters into a computer and scale them to any height above the ellipse. The problem is the person relying on the number is selling dirt on the surface of the earth and expects "the real number," not an equation and math problem to quantify.

Big whoopie ding on a 6,000 square foot lot in New Jersey, right? Well, what about a pipeline company buying 500 miles of right-of-way across the top of the Rockies? They may be inadvertently ripping off the land owners at a scale factor of \$0.99 to the dollar on grid acreage. What about the taxes assessed on the grid? The heavily opposed Nexus pipeline across Northeast Ohio turns out to be a windfall to the Cloverleaf School District in Medina County, with the school receiving an estimated \$5,447,824 this year and we want to be sure that the kiddos get every dime due from an accurate ground survey! What if a State Plane Coordinate system better approximated the ground?

NGS is offering the opportunity for States to submit low distortion projections (LDP) as plane system. However, NGS is not offering to build you an LDP so we might have to roll up our sleeves and put some elbow grease to it. This is also a great opportunity for state associations and eager students to build community pride through our profession. I won't mention that it might make life a little less complicated for a few old fogies who still measure flat earth...like me. Whether it's designing an LDP or perhaps tweaking your regulatory guidance to accommodate a new datum, SPC2022 is going to be an interactive collaboration between the NGS and the States.

We are approaching a century of experience with State plane coordinates. NAD27 held on for about 60 years and I'm still good with that. NAD83 seems like it was the AutoCAD 13 of datums. In all defense a lot has happened with technology and we all had to swim upstream with the changes. I see 2022 as an opportunity for everyone, I mean everyone, not just the paperheads, but the mud tracking ground pounders, to build a better system based on 100 years of knowing what really works and what needs to be put in a GSA storage container chained up in a wooden crate and placed on a low shelf behind a pile of rags in the basement of the Greenbrier Hotel.

I encourage every surveyor to look into this and chat with their NGS representative asap. ■

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