



The Tahoe Area National Map Pilot, California and Nevada

THE NATION NEEDS *THE NATIONAL MAP*

Although there have been great efforts and many accomplishments in coordinating geographic information, we are still a long way from the ideal state where geographic information is readily available to users at all levels for daily decisionmaking. Common issues concerning geographic data sets are that they

- ▶ do not align with each other over the same geographic areas because layers are frequently created and/or revised individually,
- ▶ do not match across administrative boundaries because each locality uses its own methods and standards,
- ▶ are not up-to-date because of the complexity and cost of maintaining data.

The USGS has developed a vision of *The National Map* to address these issues on a nationwide basis. In collaboration with other governmental agencies, academia, the private sector, and volunteer groups, the USGS will serve as the coordinator, integrator, and, where needed, producer of core geographic-framework data. *The National Map* will include high-resolution digital ortho-rectified imagery; high-resolution el-

evation, hydrography, and transportation data; cultural features; and land cover characterization. Our vision is to make the data seamless, easily accessible, and available online so that users can find out what data exist at any location and make daily decisions using spatial information.

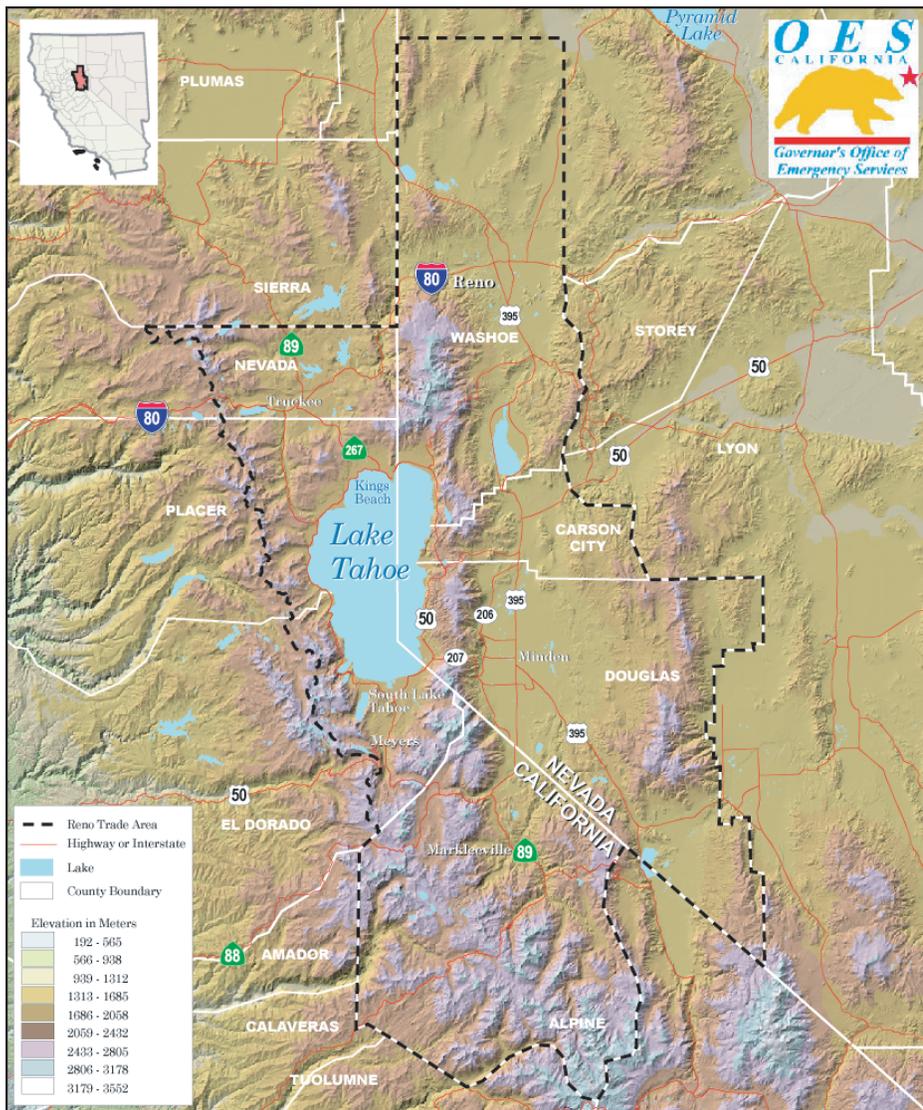
The target date for reaching this lofty vision is 2010. A number of technical and organizational questions must be investigated before such a large national undertaking can realistically be approached. Therefore, to begin the development of this new paradigm, pilot projects are being designed to research and explore the challenges it poses.

A NATIONAL MAP PILOT

Several local, regional, and utility agencies in the Tahoe area use and produce geographic information to accomplish their duties. However, their individual missions do not include responsibility for making all of the region's data sets useable with one another, offering them publicly online, and maintaining the data sets in relation to one another. The agencies are seeking a mechanism for improving access and usefulness of their data as well as acquiring new data where there are gaps.

The USGS has significant research programs in the Tahoe area that also depend on the availability of core geographic information. The USGS Decision Support System Studies Program provides Tahoe-area decision-makers with critical information regarding ecosystem and economic impacts associated with management activities and regulations. The USGS is also exploring a quantitative approach that unites land cover mapping with hydrology to assess the impacts of urban growth and land use change. Core base-map data such as imagery and elevation are required as input to these studies. In the past, research data needs were addressed on an individual basis. By coordinating research and other needs with *The National Map* pilot, we will progress from one-time, single-purpose data acquisitions toward true multi-user, multi-purpose, maintained and shared assets.





These situations, together with the work that is being done in California to advance statewide framework data coordination, represent a unique opportunity to develop a *National Map* pilot in the Tahoe area that will advance us significantly toward statewide and national goals. The Tahoe area provides a remarkable setting that will allow the USGS and its partners to test many of the building blocks of *The National Map*. There are strong ties across the California and Nevada State line that unite the area into a true cultural and economic region. The pilot will address the institutional and technical challenges of integrat-

ing data between two states, several counties and cities, and public and private organizations. The pilot will leverage existing coordination and engage area counties, cities, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, utilities, universities, and State and Federal agencies. Tahoe has numerous volunteer groups, and the desire of citizens to help conserve and maintain their environment provides a good opportunity to test the capability of obtaining updates from volunteer groups.

To mark and advance the USGS commitment to Lake Tahoe, the USGS proposes to make the Tahoe and Reno area one of a

handful of *National Map* Pilot Projects selected from around the country. The effort will build upon the President's 1997 executive order that established a formal interagency partnership charged with assuring coordination and efficient management of Federal projects and activities within the Lake Tahoe Basin.

NEXT STEPS

To advance the Tahoe Area *National Map* Pilot proposal, the USGS will in the near term seek to

- ▶ Connect with local agencies and groups to document existing data sets.
- ▶ Determine the project scope. An initial proposal to use the Reno Trade Area as the project boundary is being reviewed by the USGS and its partners in the context of satisfying multiple uses.
- ▶ Determine roles for each of the collaborators.
- ▶ Document the lessons learned from the pilot so that the results will enhance the implementation of *The National Map* program across the country.

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Please visit the Lake Tahoe Data Clearinghouse at <http://tahoe.usgs.gov>