

2014 Technology Innovation Showcase
Georgia Outdoor Map
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Complexity of the Problem

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) faced a big challenge: take mountains of geographical data and combine and present it to citizens in a meaningful way. For over 20 years, the state had invested millions of dollars to collect geospatial data, but the data was spread across more than 40 websites and stored in ArcGIS files, Oracle and SQL databases, Excel spreadsheets and PDF documents. As a result, the ability to correlate data according to multiple needs did not exist. For instance, if someone wanted to find a location that offers fishing and camping and is wheelchair accessible, it was practically impossible. In addition, none of the data was in a format that allowed access from a mobile device, and like most state agencies, DNR had very limited funds to address the challenge of somehow making the data useful to Georgians and even its own staff.

Creativity of the Solution

DNR found its solution in a public-private-academic partnership. With the assistance of interns provided by Georgia State University, DNR collected data from all five of its divisions. It then worked with an architecture team at Google to organize the data and load it into the Google Maps™ mapping service, which provides a single platform for presenting data in Google Maps. The resulting Georgia Outdoor Map, www.GeorgiaOutdoorMap.com, is a single online site where anyone can find locations for outdoor and recreational activities meeting individual wants and needs. Georgia Outdoor Map is accessible from any device with a web browser, including desktop computers, smartphones and tablets. Users can tailor searches to their specific needs, including accessibility for people with disabilities, and easily access turn-by-turn directions, telephone numbers and website links for more details.

DNR operates more than 400 properties covering more than one million acres, and Georgia Outdoor Map encompasses all properties open to the public, from the smallest historic site to the largest wildlife management area. It offers a “Near Me” feature to help users determine which recreational opportunities are close by. Users can even find the locations of artificial reefs, some of which were created with old transit cars, and sunken boats; both types of sites are often great spots for fishing.

Business Results

Georgia Outdoor Map makes information about the state’s natural, recreational, cultural and historic resources more readily available to the public, and it’s receiving up to 500 visits per day. It also:

- Enables DNR to layer existing business data on a single map so users can see information in a more insightful, actionable way
- Provides users with a no-cost, “one-stop shop” for their recreational needs
- Promotes tourism and increased use of DNR-managed sites, resulting in higher revenues
- Enhances DNR’s operational efficiency by reducing calls to DNR headquarters and its five divisions; prior to the launch of Georgia Outdoor Map, each division was receiving up to 25 calls every week about locations for various outdoor activities and their availability
- Serves as an ongoing platform for sharing information across DNR’s five divisions and program areas within each division
- Enhances public safety; if someone is lost or needs assistance while visiting a DNR-managed property, rescue teams can couple real-time views of the property’s boundaries with the GPS function that’s available on most mobile phones to find the person