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Dear Ms. Flamm:

Just a note to tell you how much I enjoyed your presentation at the St. Louis Linux Users Group last Thursday night. I appreciate that you were able to present in spite of the unusual snowfall that canceled so many activities.

My use of GIS was kind of an incidental necessity in my duties as a volunteer for the Coast Guard in their civilian auxiliary unit and involved a program to verify that the navigational lights displayed along the Mississippi River system were actually operational and visible to vessels transiting these important commercial waters at night. As the regular active duty crews are spudded down (anchored) during darkness, the Coast Guard funded our group to verify the proper operation of required signal lights installed along the rivers to help insure safe navigation of over 100 million tons annually of cargo above the St. Louis area. All transported in tow units laden as large as 25,000 tons below St. Louis (no locks or dams) and 15,000 tons above where units were constrained by dams and locks.

We had located the hundreds of riverside facilities by local piloting knowledge and the appearance of Google Maps in the early years of the century with the KML/KMZ files greatly facilitated our mission. I was involved in about 300 miles of rivers, Chester, IL to LaGrange IL on the Mississippi, St. Louis to the Gasconade River on the Missouri River, St. Louis to Beardstown IL on the Illinois River, and Kaskaskia to New Haven IL on the Kaskaskia River. Some of these regions had no GPS available and it is somewhat dicey at night. One complication was the 9/11/2001 attacks that resulted in the obfuscation of all riverside identification of where one is for national security hardening requirements.

As we were limited to 10 meter GPS resolution at the start and improved to 3 meter accuracy after 9/11, I was interested in your touting the sub-centimeter resolution in the current system, and, of course the elevation data now available.

Thanks again for the delightful presentation.

Very truly yours

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'David Forrest', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

David Forrest
Maple Park Development Corporation
Linux Integration Specialist (Retired-Now Hobbyist)

cc: St. Louis Linux Users Group

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