

Betty Jane Kreakie, Ph.D.
US Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Research and Development
Atlantic Ecology Division
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Developing spatial data protocol and a geodatabase for the Surinamese Ministry of Physical Planning, Land and Forest Management

The Surinamese Ministry of Physical Planning, Land and Forest Management (*De minister van Ruimtelijke ordening, Grond- en Bosbeheer (Ministry RGB)*) is tasked with a wide range of critical environmental duties. This ministry is responsible for monitoring and protecting federally protected areas, permitting and enforcing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), and protecting critically endangered species. Through a US State Department embassy science fellowship, I was assigned to work with this ministry to develop a centralized geodatabase and increase their overall GIS capacity. Eventually, this geodatabase may serve as a spatial data repository for other ministries that deal with environmental issues as well. Prior to this project, all spatial data management and GPS training of game wardens was the responsibility of a single data manager. The initial phase required the development of a spatial data and metadata management protocol for field workers (mainly game wardens and flora and fauna surveyors). The goal was to empower them to create their own maps and independently process GPS data and metadata. This required new training materials and workshops which emphasized the scientific importance of their data. These new protocols allow the spatial data manager to conduct higher level data management. The second phase of the project concentrated on developing quality standards and protocols for data that is to be incorporated into the geodatabase. The project is in the early phases. The tools and framework created will lead to sustainable data management program with increased data quality and capacity for sharing.