

Case Study:

Campbell County, Wyoming- "The Cowboy State"
Has Early Accomplishments and Ambitious
Plans for GIS Technology
Campbell County, Wyoming

Campbell County, Wyoming- "The Cowboy State" Has Early Accomplishments and Ambitious Plans for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Technology

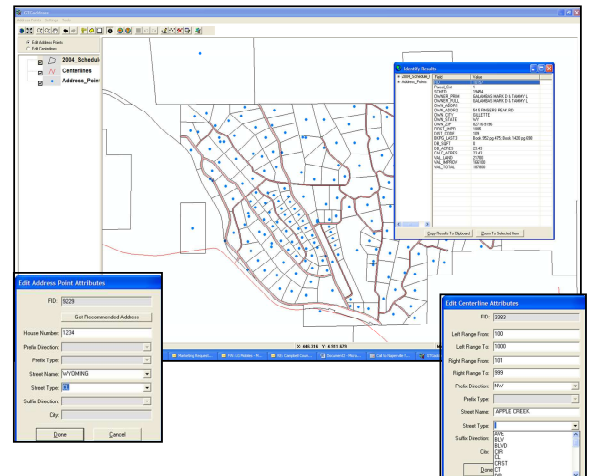
Campbell County, Wyoming



When it comes to geography, Wyoming might be one of the most remarkable of the 50 states. It's where the Great Plains meets the Rocky Mountains, where explorers rushed for gold in the 19th century, where the fictitious aliens landed in Close Encounters of the Third Kind, and where people still come from all over to enjoy the breathtaking, rugged scenery and the spirit of independence.

And in Campbell County, even the names of the local landmarks sound inspiring and adventurous: Antelope Valley, Sleepy Hollow, the Old Well Pit, Wormwood Ranch, Dead Horse Lake and All Night Creek.

But Campbell County is also progressive, modern and technologically savvy and its sophisticated citizens expect state-of-the-art service from every county department. County leaders realized several years ago that GIS technology was critical in ensuring its departments worked at optimal efficiency.



GIS coordinator Cathy Raney arrived three years ago to spearhead the effort.

"The Department Managers went to the County Commissioners and persuaded them that the time had come to really focus on a comprehensive GIS program that would give us the right software, the right hardware, an accurate database that we could share and the knowledge to use all of it," she said.

When Raney began in Campbell County, all the County had was plat maps in AutoCAD.

"The first thing I did was provide the assessor's technician with the tools necessary to bring the unregistered AutoCAD files into a seamless layer in the GIS database," she said. "The next thing I did was look at all of the software licenses we had accumulated over the years, upgrade them and distribute them to several departments. We also deployed some new licenses and bought a server to locate all of our data."

Raney said it was almost immediately evident that Campbell County would need an implementation plan to guide them. She received approval to write and distribute an RFP.

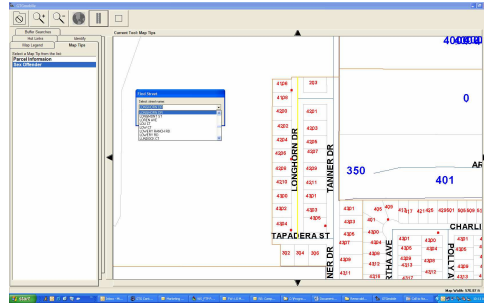
"I knew that we wanted to include Geographic Technologies Group in the RFP. I knew several staff from the work they did for the City of Gillette, which had gone through a similar process. As it turned out, GTG was not only the low bidder, they were the most qualified bidder, so we moved forward with them," Raney said.

As part of the plan, Campbell County purchased 14 licenses of GTG-crimes, 14 new Panasonic ToughBook computers for deputies' patrol cars, and four kiosks using GTG's MapTouch for the Library, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Assessor's Office and the Sheriff's Department.

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Today Campbell County is only halfway into year one of the plan, but already all of the year's goals have been accomplished.



"We have done some major things very quickly," she said.

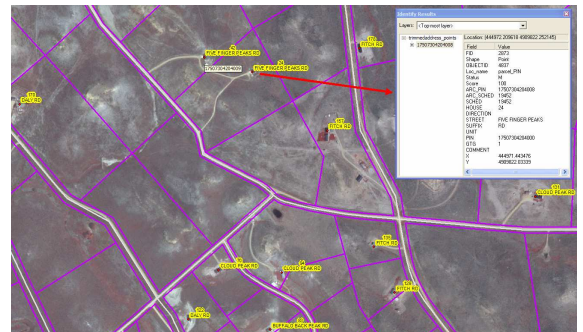
Public safety officials in the County are particularly excited about GIS' ability to help them better protect the public.

"Our GIS database can deliver information on parcels, road centerlines, flood plains and location points on the large seam of coal running through the County, where the coal mines are located. The implications for emergency response are huge, and that's one reason we made getting the information to our Sheriff's deputies a top GIS priority," Raney said.

Campbell County coal provides the nation with about 30% of its energy, and coal bed methane development is fast becoming another viable source of energy, and the safety of miners and drillers has never been more prominent in the minds of emergency responders.

"Some of the mineral workers are in very remote locations, but those locations are easy to find with GIS data, and rescue workers can get there faster than ever before," she said. "We keep adding more layers of refinement and checking and verifying address ranges. It all adds up to better citizen service."

When Raney first saw the implementation plan GTG developed for Campbell County, she could not imagine keeping on schedule, much less running ahead of schedule. But midway through year one, she is already working on year two projects.



"I remember looking at the schedule for year one thinking, 'wow, this is really ambitious.' But it's done. There's no way I could have done this much in this short amount of time without GTG's continuing help," she said.

"We are already working on our Internet map site, bringing it in-house and getting it ready to serve to the public. You can add and remove layers like parcels, roads, mines, schools, churches, county facilities and hotels and restaurants. There are a million possibilities and I know our citizens will love it."

Also planned in year two is giving remote access to the GIS database (in addition to the 14 licenses for the Sheriff's Department) for workers in the Health Department, the Fire Department and the Assessor's Office.

"It will be enormously helpful to Health Department employees when they do home visits," she said. "And the Assessor's Office visits each property every four years to do visual inspections. They'll be able to help us maintain the address layer and make sure it's up to date."

Addressing is one of the county's biggest challenges, Raney said, stemming from the way the communities evolved from ranches, mobile home parks and a downtown area with lots of larger, older homes. Address assignment has not always been logical and systematic. "Lots of times, people made up their own addresses," she said.

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“The County is on an upward economic swing right now and we’re facing the need to look at our zoning and addressing conventions. It’s a big job cataloguing these wide, open spaces.”

GTG continues to be a part of the County’s GIS initiative with GPS data collection.

“GTG helped with two crucial layers of our database,” Raney said. “After compiling several sets of source data I provided, they spent two weeks in the field gathering GPS points on missing addresses and they polished the road centerline file.

“They also facilitated the acquisition of asset management software for our Public Works Department. I think of GTG as the staff I don’t have,” she said. “They have been our extra legs and arms and dozens of eyes.”

For all the quick accomplishments of the GIS program, it’s still a well-kept secret in Campbell County. But, not for long.

“We did a demonstration for some of the departments on the kiosk using Map Touch and the Assessor was so excited by the technology, he decided to demo his touch screen at the Commissioner’s Board Appreciation Dinner.”

“Everyone who has seen or used GIS loves it. I know very soon, the word will be out, and we’ll no longer be a well-kept secret,” Raney said.

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