

April 6, 2005

Dr. John H. Marburger, III
Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
Washington, D.C. 20502
By FAX: 202-456-6021

Dear Dr. Marburger,

The American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) and the Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS) applaud the Administration's recognition that Landsat is a national asset, and specifically the decision to ensure long-term continuity of Landsat-type data observations as stated in your memorandum dated August 13, 2004. However, we are concerned about the Administration's recent decision not to pursue a "bridge" mission, particularly when you noted in your memorandum that "any disruption in the continuous availability of Landsat imagery, products and value-added services will adversely affect governmental, international, and other users and may limit use of the global data set for certain types of scientific analysis."

Founded in 1934, ASPRS is a scientific and educational organization of more than 6000 geospatial information specialists and 140 sustaining corporate members, operating both nationally and internationally. MAPPS, founded in 1982, is the oldest and largest national association of private firms engaged in surveying, photogrammetry, satellite and airborne remote sensing, geographic information systems and other related technologies, with more than more than 150 member firms employing more than 10,000 individuals. Together our organizations represent the nation's \$2 billion mapping and remote sensing professions.

The 32-year series of Landsat satellites (1-5 & 7) has unquestionably been the most successful long-term civilian land remote sensing satellite system deployed by any space-faring nation. Landsat data and data products have made—and continue to make—essential contributions to U.S. economic, environmental, public safety, emergency relief, and national security interests. However, a **gap** in the continuous flow of these images of the Earth's land masses is already occurring due to system limitations on board the two-decade old Landsat 5 and a Landsat 7 sensor malfunction, which began on May 31, 2003 and cannot be fixed.

The **Landsat data gap is real**, and it is adversely affecting both producers and users of the data, many of whom are turning to foreign sources in an attempt to fill their information needs. But what is most discouraging to our members and the clients we serve, including Federal, state, and local government agencies, is that without a "bridge" mission, the **Landsat data gap will be long**--at least 5 and maybe up to 10 years.

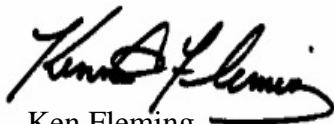
The transition of Landsat measurements to an operational environment, through incorporation of Landsat-type sensors on the National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS), is eventually anticipated to ensure long-term data continuity. We fully support that transition.

However, the NPOESS solution is severely challenged in the short-term, both technically and fiscally, and will certainly require significantly greater development time than currently programmed. Foreign countries, especially in Europe, have already recognized a clear opportunity and are moving ahead with their own Landsat-like systems. These developments further erode our nation's leadership in remote sensing space activities and diminish our industry's international competitiveness.

The United States remote sensing/aerospace profession has made it clear that a Landsat-like "bridge" system is a **cost effective alternative** that, according to knowledgeable industry sources, can be built and launched within 36 to 40 months at less than half the cost of the Landsat 7 system. Such a system would clearly support the President's U.S. Commercial Space Policy, dated April 25, 2003, by "maintaining the nation's leadership in remote sensing space activities" and "sustaining and enhancing the U.S. remote sensing industry."

ASPRS and MAPPS strongly urge the Administration to reconsider its decision to eliminate the "bridge" mission. The "bridge" mission would both **shorten the Landsat data gap** and **demonstrate the competitiveness** of the U.S., while also sustaining U.S. leadership in satellite land remote sensing and global monitoring from space.

Sincerely,



Ken Fleming
President, MAPPS



Karen L. Schuckman
President, ASPRS