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CONTACTS: Anna Marie Kinerney, ASPRS Communications Dept.
301-493-0290 ext.106 akinerney@asprs.org

John Palatiello, MAPPS Executive Director
703.787.6996 john@mapps.org

ASPRS AND MAPPS APPLAUD WHITE HOUSE SUPPORT FOR LANDSAT CONTINUITY FREE FLYER MISSION

The Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS) and the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) today praised the Bush Administration for unveiling a new policy on continuity of the LANDSAT program.

Calling the December 23rd policy memo by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, "a Christmas present to the remote sensing community," MAPPS and ASPRS applauded initiatives that (quoting from the memo) direct "NASA to acquire a single Landsat data continuity mission in the form of a free flyer spacecraft," to deliver the spacecraft's data to USGS for "collection, archiving, processing and distribution," and direct the National Science and Technology Council to coordinate with other agencies "to develop a long-term plan to achieve technical, financial and managerial stability for operational land imaging in accord with the goals and objectives of the U.S Integrated Earth Observation System."

MAPPS and ASPRS were instrumental in persuading the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to commit to a free flyer in an effort to minimize the current widening gap in Landsat data.

First launched in 1972, the Landsat program has been overwhelmingly successful. Moderate resolution Landsat satellite data has been considered a national asset throughout the program's 33-year history, making essential contributions to U.S. economic, environmental, public safety, emergency relief, and national security interests.

In May of 2003, the Landsat 7 ETM+ sensor experienced a partial but permanent failure of its scan line corrector resulting in a loss of approximately 12% of each scene. On November 26, 2005, Landsat 5's solar array drive (which points the satellite solar panels to the sun) began to fail. Each day without fully functional Landsat data blinds the Nation and the world, leaving scientists and policy makers unprepared to understand, predict or manage global resources or how they change over time.

In 2005, MAPPS and ASPRS wrote two letters to Dr. John H. Marburger, III, Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, urging the Administration to, "move quickly and forcefully to secure the future of mid-resolution land imaging data through deployment of a free-flying U.S. government mission." In the U.S., MAPPS and ASPRS together represent the $5 billion mapping and remote sensing profession, including individuals and organizations from private, government and academic sectors. "We are ecstatic about the White House's commitment to the Landsat Program," stated John Palatiello, Executive Director of MAPPS and James Plasker, Executive Director of ASPRS.

Noting that the Landsat Program still needs to evolve into a sustained operational program, Palatiello and Plasker stated, "We are very pleased to have been able to work with the Administration on this issue. We look forward to seeing the immediate Landsat Data Continuity Mission gap filled, and to working with the White House and the rest of the community to address the long-term issues which are still very critical."

Founded in 1934, ASPRS is an international professional organization of 7,000 geospatial data professionals. ASPRS is devoted to advancing knowledge and improving understanding of the mapping sciences to promote responsible application of photogrammetry, remote sensing, geographic information systems and supporting technologies.

MAPPS is the only U.S. trade and professional association of private geospatial firms. Formed in 1982, MAPPS has more than 150 private sector firms from all aspects of the geospatial profession. Its member firms are in the mapping, spatial data and geographic information systems field engaged in mapping, photogrammetry, satellite and airborne remote sensing, aerial photography, hydrography, aerial and satellite image processing, GPS and GIS data collection, integration and conversion services. For information, visit the association's website at www.mapps.org.

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