



fGIS no longer available

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The free GIS computer program, fGIS, is no longer available for free download from the Digital Grove website at <http://www.digitalgrove.net/>. I wrote articles about fGIS in this column in July and August of this year. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources was making fGIS available under a licensing agreement with the software developer. The licensing agreement ended in November 2005. The developer intends to make a similar program available in January 2006. The new program, called Digital Grove Field Editor, will be sold for \$130 for single copies, and less for multiple copies.

Currently I know of no free GIS computer programs although there are several free "viewers." Viewers are different from true GIS programs. Viewers only allow users to look at GIS maps or images but do not allow users to edit existing data or to make new GIS map layers. An Internet search for free GIS programs turns up several programs, but a careful reading about each program or a trial use will determine that each one is actually just a GIS viewer. Examples are ArcExplorer and TatukGIS Viewer.

The TatukGIS Viewer is likely the most functional GIS viewer currently available without cost. It is available for download at <http://www.digitalgrove.net/Toolbox.htm>. The TatukGIS Viewer opens most GIS layer formats and raster image file types, and can export geo-referenced maps for use in other GIS programs. This viewer also allows users to measure areas on maps and images. TatukGIS Viewer users can alter the appearance (colors, styles, fills, outlines, symbols, transparency, etc.) of GIS layers. The size of the TatukGIS Viewer is only 2.5 megabytes which makes it fast to download and it takes up little computer space. Visitors to the Digital Grove web site will also find several low-cost GIS programs available.

Individuals interested in learning more about GIS computer software programs for specific applications are encouraged to contact John Nowatzki, extension geospatial technology specialist at 701-231-8213 or John.Nowatzki@ndsu.edu