

GIS Circuit Rider Program Technology Brings Opportunities to Upper Shore Region



CHESTERTOWN, MD (July 25, 2022) — In January of 2021, the Upper Shore Regional Council joined the GIS Circuit Rider program, an offering of Salisbury University's Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC), to bring the advantages of GIS technology to Maryland's Upper Shore Region. The program was created in 2018 by the Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC) and expanded to the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore (TCCLES) in 2019. Through the technology and support of the GIS Circuit Rider program, jurisdictions throughout the Upper Shore now have increased access to specialized solutions for data needs, and the economic and strategic opportunities it brings.

GIS (short for Geographic Information System) technology creates, manages, analyzes, and maps geographically referenced information, integrating data from a unique location with individual descriptors. Using this technology, the GIS Circuit Rider program gives the Upper Shore and other regions access to services including topographical mapping applications, business entity data, and projects to promote tourism and economic development.

Funding for the GIS Circuit Rider program is provided through the Rural Maryland Council by Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Funds (RMPIF), a grant program that addresses critical challenges and moves rural Maryland forward by making targeted investments in economic and community development programs.

"The GIS Circuit Rider program opens doors for the Upper Shore region, giving us access to geographic data and support in analyzing and funneling that data into applications that will improve infrastructure, operations, and functioning for the regions' residents and decision-makers," says Susan O'Neill, Executive Director of USRC. "The RMPIF grant means we are able to provide free GIS support to the towns and municipalities across the Upper Shore, which is an incredible opportunity."

"This initiative is in alignment with many of the goals and objectives of the RMPIF funding," says Lauren McDermott, GISP, Practice Manager at ESRGC. "A long-time goal of the ESRGC has been to provide GIS services to our rural partners with the hope of leveling the playing field in terms of GIS access and utilization. This program is one of the many ways in which RMPIF funding is being used to achieve this goal."

A recent project for the Upper Shore was the FoodieCecil Destinations web map created for Cecil County. The GIS Circuit Rider program staff worked with the department of tourism and the Cecil County Office of Economic Development to create a web map showing foodie destinations and restaurants available in the region.

“One of our missions is to put web applications into the hands of the people,” says Mary Buffington, GISP, Project Manager at ESRGC. “We’re visualizing information and putting it out in a way that is consumable by the average person. Or sometimes the information is for the town planner or public works, to help their workflow.”

Projects under the GIS Circuit Rider program might involve LiDAR – Light Detection and Ranging – a remote sensing method that uses light as a pulsed laser to measure ranges (variable distances) to the Earth. The Circuit Rider program provides additional LiDAR derivative products not available through the State of Maryland Department of Information Technology and include tree canopy layers, hill shade, and a digital surface model (DSM).

Other projects developed by the GIS Circuit Rider program for the Upper Shore include:

- A web map for the city of Galena in Kent County identifying a public restroom, businesses, and parcel and zoning data.
- A web map application for the Town of Centerville Department of Public Works in Queen Anne's County.
- A web map application for Charlestown in Cecil County showing Charlestown’s water infrastructure.
- A custom web map application with a boundary data layer development for the Town of Queen Anne in Queen Anne’s County.
- A custom web map application to view parcels, parks, the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, and aerial imagery in the City of Millington in Kent and Queen Anne’s Counties.

For more information about the Upper Shore Regional Council’s GIS Circuit Rider program involvement and support, visit: <https://usrcmd.org/gis/>

About the Upper Shore Regional Council: Since 2003, the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC) has fostered planning and development in Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne’s counties. USRC affords federal, state, county, and local governments a regional forum to identify issues and opportunities. USRC plans and implements programs to improve the quality of life in the Upper Shore Region of Maryland.

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