

SPRING FEVER

WE'LL NEED TO REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS THIS YEAR TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE – ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING THE GEOSPATIAL INDUSTRY AND THE WORLD, SAYS **ALISTAIR MACLENAN**

Unlike many people who see New Year's Eve as the start of the year, for me, it's spring.

The start of a calendar year happens during the darkest days of winter when most people tend to hibernate both their effort and their ideas. However, with the Spring Equinox behind us and the much-needed sun's energy coursing around our bodies, we geospatialists are all in the right frame of mind to go out into the big wide world and explain why it is our industry can meet the huge challenges we face.

Of course, one of the largest, if not the largest, of those challenges is the changing climate that many who read this column are undoubtedly measuring, analysing and reporting upon.

One of those recently released reports, with a higher profile than most, was Volume Two of the Fourth National Climate Assessment from the US Global Change Research Program (USGCRP).

Since the Global Change Research Act was passed in the US in 1990, the USGCRP

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has been mandated to provide a report at least every four years that 'integrates, evaluates, and interprets the findings of the Program... analyzes the effects of global change on the natural environment, agriculture, energy production and use, land and water resources, transportation, human health and welfare, human social systems, and biological diversity... [and] analyzes current trends in global change, both human-induced and natural, and projects major trends for the subsequent 25 to 100 years.'

These guys aren't mucking about! The organisation consists of more than 300 people working in government (state and local), the private sector, national laboratories, tribes and Indigenous communities, and universities. The sources for their work include more than 1,000 original approved-standard reports, workshops, interviews and even a public consultation.

And all that work is distilled into a report of 12 sections of which I only have room to reproduce the summaries of the

first two: 'Climate change creates new risks and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities in communities across the United States, presenting growing challenges to human health and safety, quality of life, and the rate of economic growth' and 'Without substantial and sustained global mitigation and regional adaptation efforts, climate change is expected to cause growing losses to American infrastructure and property and impede the rate of economic growth over this century.' Believe me, the other 10 are no more cheerful.

So how was this important, validated, in-depth scientific body of work that talks to the very existence of the human species and all other life on the planet received?

Well, sadly, not long after it was released, the weather (note, not the

climate) across America turned cold, which prompted the President of the United States of America to Tweet: 'What the hell is going on with Global Warming [sic]? Please come back fast, we need you!'

To date, that Tweet has been liked by 204,772 people. I don't have the download figures for the USGCRP report, but I wouldn't be surprised if it was less than a tenth of that number. If I am right and spring is the start of the year, it would appear that we have a lot of work ahead of us in 2019 to make sure we all can celebrate many more New Year's Eves in the future.

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