# Task force on Streamlining the Governance and Management of ASPRS

# Report to Executive Committee:

# Recommendation #2: Divisions

# 19 APRIL 2015

# (to be considered by Excom at its meeting on xx April 2015 and presented to the Board of Directors for consideration at its meeting on 8 May 2015)

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### **Introduction**

The Streamlining Task Force presented a report to the Board at its meeting in Denver on 17 November 2014. While the overall direction of the Task Force’s recommendations was accepted, it was felt that the recommendations were insufficiently specific to indicate clear actions. The Task Force, therefore, agreed to present to Excom a series of short, focused reports on individual recommendations. Of the seven recommendations in the original report, #7 is already being implemented and requires no further treatment. Thus six reports are required, of which this covers Recommendation #2 on Division structure, which was written as follows in the report to the Board:

“Leave the overall Division structure as it is, but support members’ wishes to establish a UASD. Around 150 signatures petitioning for UASD were collected at the ASPRS UAS Technical Demonstration and Symposium in Reno and it seems very likely that the additional 50 will be obtained before the Pecora conference, at which the Board will therefore be in a position to ratify the new Division. Consider consolidating PAD and PDAD to avoid overlap and maintain relevancy. Enable members to receive communications from more than one Division. Consider calling the Divisions ‘Special Interest Groups (SIGs)’, i.e. adopt a more modern nomenclature and an approach taken by other professional bodies worldwide. Perhaps the key contribution of the Society lies in the projects conducted by the Divisions, which should therefore be better communicated and more accessible to members. Projects conducted by subcommittees and standing committees should be treated similarly.”

### **Analysis**

Though the above paragraph was reasonable when it was written and presented to the Board, it has been overtaken by events. UASD was declared to exist on 29 January 2015. A Division Director has been appointed by the President and an election for Assistant Division Director has taken place, resulting in the successful candidate taking up office during the 2015 Annual Conference in Tampa. Similarly, the President will appoint a Division Director and Assistant Division Director of PDAD. There are candidates for all four positions. Thus the notion of enlarging and renaming PAD must be put to one side for the time being. This could, but need not, delay the upgrading of the Defense & Intelligence Committee, which is currently in PAD, into a division in its own right, but thus far there seems little thrust from the Committee itself for this nor does the level of work in the Committee undergird the notion of an upgrade.

The Task Force has considered the issue of nomenclature at length. There is enthusiasm for two alternatives to “Division”. The name “Special Interest Group” or “SIG” is popular, for example in our UK counterpart RSPSoc, though it is not clear what is “special” about each interest. Nevertheless, “SIG” carries messages of modernity and nimbleness, i.e. a small group easily formed and dissolved as some particular area becomes popular then wanes. But the Task Force has also considered “Technical Working Group”, which similarly implies small size and greater maneuverability. The first word parallels the top level bodies in ISPRS, i.e. Technical Divisions, whereas the second and third parallel the lower level bodies there, i.e. Working Groups, which report up to the Technical Divisions. The Task Force also discussed further alternatives: “Expert Groups”, “Technical Expert Groups”, “Expert Working Groups” and “Expert Domains”. The Task Force would not be averse, however, to retaining the existing name “Division”.

Any decision on renaming the Divisions should consider not only the current structure, but the direction the Society would like the Division structure to take in the future. There is a definite need (identified by both this Task Force as well as many other stakeholders) to ensure relevance of the Society to current interests. With the exception of Professional Practices, the current Division structure is technically oriented and organized according to technology. The Special Interest Group model used by RSPSoc is more focused on applications or use areas, or perhaps true “Special Interests.” Examples of such RSPSoc SIGs are: Archeology, Disaster Management, Geology, Conservation/Indigenous Communities, etc. Thus “Technical Working Group” may better describe how the Society is structured now, whereas “Special Interest Group” may better describe where the Society would like to move in the future. This will require further discussion as well as input from the Division leadership. The Task Force’s separate report on its Recommendation #4, Committees, includes arguments in favor of changing the Division Directors Committee into Division Directors Council and, for the sake of continuity, gravitas and reduction of the burden on any particular Division Director, requiring that the Council be chaired by the President-Elect, supported by the Vice President as Deputy Chair.

In the absence of consensus, the Task Force is therefore not making a recommendation on changing the word “Division” into something else. It does, however, feel that the use of “Committee”, i.e. the body within a Division that works on a particular project, has to be changed. The main reason is that this term causes confusion with the Standing Committees of the Society. It is proposed, therefore, that the term “Working Group” be used. Readers will remember that “Working Group” is already defined in Article IX, Section 4 of the Society’s bylaws, for a group convened to address a particular issue, then disbanded when its work is done. In practice, however, the term “Task Force” is being used for such groups and this Task Force will recommend in another of its reports that this bylaw be changed accordingly. Thus “Working Group” will become free for use as a working body within a Division.

Given the difficulties of forming UASD and of identifying Division Directors and Assistant Division Directors for both UASD and PDAD, whilst the Society is contracting and suffering financial difficulties, this may not be the time to propose new divisions. Adding the UAS and LiDAR Divisions was absolutely critical to maintain relevance, but also significantly impacted both leadership and participation in PAD and PDAD. UAS and LiDAR were both cornerstone activities for the PAD and PDAD Divisions. Nevertheless, solving the Society’s problems is contingent on making it more appealing so that we can retain existing members and attract new ones. This will take time and this Task Force is not recommending sweeping changes at this point, but rather recommendations that facilitate longer term evolution. The Task Force has come up with the following recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

* The Task Force recommends that the existing divisions continue and that the officer positions be filled by the processes described above.
* The current naming of PAD and PDAD should be evaluated by the leadership in those Divisions. This Task Force recommends that these Divisions be charged with discussing the issue and evaluating alternatives. The existing names are confusing and are arguably not directly relevant to the membership. One possible scenario is to rename PDAD along the lines of “Sensors and Acquisition”; PAD could be “Photogrammetry Applications” or perhaps just “Photogrammetry”. In this case, the function and leadership of the Divisions would not change, only the names.
* An alternative consideration is to combine PAD and PDAD into a single Photogrammetry or Photogrammetry and Sensors Division. The Task Force is not recommending this as an immediate action, but as a topic of discussion for those Divisions. Particularly in the case of PAD, separating out LiDAR activities had a significant impact on participation. Separating out Defense and Intelligence, if that were pursued, would have further impacts. There are still many relevant activities related to Photogrammetry applications, separate from sensors and acquisition, which could be addressed. Point clouds, transportation and map accuracies are some key areas. It is hoped that the new leadership of PDAD and PAD will energize those divisions to focus on other new and relevant activities, now that UAS and LiDAR are standalone Divisions. Should this not be the case, the question of dissolving PAD or PDAD will arise naturally between the 2015 and 2017 Annual Conferences, i.e. before the next rotation of officers.
* The issue of nomenclature is not considered critical, though a different name could carry marketing advantages. The Task Force is making no recommendation. The unit within a Division that is set up to work on a particular project, however, should be called a “Working Group”.
* There could be a case, especially if PAD and PDAD were combined, for raising the status of the Defense & Intelligence Committee to a division to reflect the major importance of this body’s subject matter and work program.
* With the Society smaller than it once was and struggling with identifying officers for the existing divisions, this may not be an opportune time to propose new divisions. Nevertheless, there could exist areas of interest among the members that are not being adequately served by the foci of the current divisions. Examples are the history of photogrammetry and remote sensing, transportation, geodesy, and markets and policies (this last one has a business rather than technical focus). Under the current structure, these could also be as addressed by Working Groups of the existing Divisions.
* We repeat our recommendation from elsewhere in our work that the Division Directors Committee be raised in status to Division Directors Council, consisting of the Division Directors and Assistant Division Directors, with the President-Elect as Chair and Vice President as Deputy Chair.