

GeoMentoring Program initiated

—by Jim Bauman and Jane Hnedron

Two GIS-based service projects identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge and conducted by the National 4-H GIS Leadership Team and Equipo GIS initiated a new program encouraging people of all ages to get involved in GIS activities.

The newly established GeoMentor program was jointly announced by ESRI and the National Geographic Society during the Plenary Session at ESRI's 29th annual International User Conference.

The program enlists people who use geographic information to help educators and students better understand the many ways geography and GIS can help us comprehend the interrelation of objects and events in our world.

One USFWS-led project was conducted at Gunpowder Point, part of the Sweetwater Marsh Refuge Unit located in Chula Vista, California, about 10 miles south of San Diego. Gunpowder Point was once the site of the Hercules Powder Company plant where, between 1916 and 1919, kelp was processed to produce acetone. The acetone was exported to Great Britain to make cordite, an explosive used by the British during World War I.

The GIS youth team used old maps, current aerial photographs, and structural remains in the field to determine the historic location of the 156 redwood digestive tanks where kelp was converted to acetone. Other remains from the historic facility were also located in the field and recorded. The data will assist the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge in developing interpretive materials that would tell the story of Gunpowder Point's role during World War I."

For their second project, the students journeyed to the South San Diego Bay Refuge Unit in Imperial Beach, where they mapped the future route of a nature trail and delineated the edge of the wetland habitat around an existing salt pond by evaluating soils and plant life. The data collected will assist refuge staff in planning future projects including the construction of the nature trail and the restoration of the salt pond to a native salt marsh habitat. 