Guide to the Donald E. Wilson Earth Resources Survey Program Papers, 1972-1983

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Donald E. Wilson Earth Resources Survey Program Papers
Date (inclusive): 1972-1983
Collection Number: PP07.13-DW
Creator: Wilson, Donald E.
Extent: Number of containers: 10
Volume: 4 cubic feet
Repository: Ames Research Center, Ames History Office
Moffett Field, California 94035

Abstract: This collection includes reports, correspondence, newsletters, maps, and imagery documenting the applications of remote sensing of earth resources and technology transfer efforts to establish Landsat data analysis capabilities in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. The collection is arranged in six series that reflect the administration, programs, and records related to these earth resources survey applications projects, as well as the activities of Donald E. Wilson during his career at the NASA Ames Research Center.

Language: English

Access
Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation
NASA Ames History Office, NASA Ames Research Center. Moffett Field, California. PP07.13-DW, Donald E. Wilson Earth Resources Survey Program Papers, [Container number] : [Folder number]. [Identification of item]. [Date, if available].

Abbreviated Citation
NASA ARC. PP07.13-DW, [Container number] : [Folder number]. [Identification of item]. [Date, if available].

Administrative Information

Related Material

Custodial History
The accumulated records of Donald E. Wilson were given to Robert E. Slye (NASA Advanced Supercomputing Division) to store when Wilson retired in 1988.
Acquisition Information
Transferred by Robert E. Slye in August 2007.

Administrative and Biographical History
Donald E. Wilson began his career at the NASA Ames Research Center as a member of the Entry Simulation Team (Code ESB) in 1962. From 1963 to 1971, Wilson worked in the Materials Research Branch (Code SVM) of the Vehicle and Environment Division (Code SV) under the Astronautics Directorate (Code S). It was renamed the Materials Science Branch (Code STS) and reassigned to the Thermo- and Gas-Dynamics Division (Code ST) in 1972, when the Vehicle and Environment Division, which had supported the Apollo missions, was eliminated. During the course of his materials science research, Wilson co-authored technical reports on the thermal analysis of polymeric materials, as well as a study on low temperature cooling techniques.

In August 1972, NASA headquarters chartered Ames with the lead center responsibility for the remote sensing aircraft program. The Applications Aircraft Support Program Office (AASPO), managed by Edward W. Gomersall, was established in December 1972 to provide aerial support for earth observation satellites, remote sensing applications, and damage assessments. The AASPO fleet included two U-2 aircraft, which were made available for research purposes by the U.S. Air Force and arrived at Ames in 1971. (The civilian version of U-2 aircraft was named ER-2 for earth resources.) Wilson was assigned to the Evaluation and Analysis section of the AASPO, also known as the Applications Aircraft and Future Programs Office. In 1974, Wilson assumed the role of Technical Assistant with the Thermo- and Gas-Dynamics Division.

In 1976, Wilson was assigned to the User Applications Branch (Code SEA) of the Airborne Missions and Applications Division (Code SE), headed by Dale R. Lumb. The branch was renamed the Technical Applications Branch in 1979. Ames hosted the Western Regional Remote Sensing Conference in 1979 and 1981 to aid in the transfer of operational capabilities for the utilization of remote sensing technology for earth resource management among state and local governments, private industry, and universities.

In 1979, Carter’s Presidential Directive 54 initiated the transfer of Landsat operations from NASA to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Two years later, President Reagan proposed the termination of all regional commissions, as well as reduced funding to technology transfer programs, which accelerated the commercialization of satellite operations. In response, Ames underwent a major reorganization in 1984 in which the Airborne and Missions Applications Division was removed. Wilson was transferred to the Medium Altitude Missions Branch (Code OMM) in the Science and Applications Aircraft Division (Code OM) under the Director of Flight Operations and retired on April 22, 1988.

Landsat
The Earth Resources Technology Satellite (ERTS), renamed Landsat in 1975, was equipped with remote sensors, including high resolution multispectral scanner systems (MSS), return beam vidicon (RBV) imaging systems (used on Landsat 1, 2 and 3), and thematic mapper instruments (first used on Landsat 4), designed to acquire data to categorize Earth’s surface. The first satellite, ERTS-1, was launched in 1972, and Landsat 4 was launched in 1982. Landsat is the longest running enterprise for the acquisition of imagery of the earth from space.

Sources Consulted:

Indexing Terms
The following terms may be used to index this collection.

Corporate Name
Ames Research Center
United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration

**Subjects**
- Earth observations (from space)
- Earth Resources Survey aircraft
- Earth Resources Survey Program
- Geographic information systems
- Landsat satellites
- Remote sensing
- Technology transfer

**Geographic Names**
- Moffett Field (Calif.)
- Pacific Northwest (U.S.)

**Scope and Content**
The Donald E. Wilson Earth Resources Survey Program Papers (4 cubic feet) includes reports, project plans, proposals, consortium agreements, meeting minutes, memos, correspondence, newsletters, maps, lithographs, photographs, and slides documenting demonstrations of useful applications of remote sensing data to manage earth resources. The collection also contains records that cover the transfer of computing technology to establish Landsat imagery analysis capabilities within local and state agencies in the western United States, primarily in the Pacific Northwest region. The collection is arranged in six series that record the administration and progress of the Landsat applications programs with a focus on NASA’s role in research and the commercial potential for operational technology programs.

The first series documents the activities of the Applications Aircraft Support Programs Office in the early 1970s. An earth resource survey cost benefit study presented to the Office of Management and Budget was vital to the national decision to pursue an operational earth remote sensing system. Land use maps and classification systems are also included.

The second series, Pacific Northwest Region, contains records encompassing Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. With its inception in 1972, the Pacific Northwest Regional Commission (PNRC), which consisted of the governors and a federal co-chairman appointed by the President, was charged with setting priorities and approving projects that contributed to the economic development of the region. The PNRC established Land Resources Inventory Demonstration Projects (LRIDP) to demonstrate the utility of Landsat imagery analysis to earth resource management. The Landsat Application Program (LAP) was later conceived as a three-year continuation of LRIDP to establish full in-state operational capability for Landsat data analysis systems. In 1974, the PNRC formed the Technology Transfer Task Force, composed of representatives from the three states, NASA, and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), to oversee LAP, specifically to make recommendations, as well as monitor and coordinate technology transfer activities. NASA’s role was to provide technical consulting and assistance in methodology for the users in state and local agencies. This included some support of the Western Regional Applications Program (WRAP) and Application System Verification and Transfer (ASVT) projects, both of which comprise a relatively small number of items in this collection.

The third series, Land Resources Inventory Demonstration Projects / Landsat Applications Program, represents the majority of the collection. It contains project proposals, reports, letters, and consortium agreements with universities documenting demonstrations of the use of Landsat data for applications to land use management, urban development planning, range surveys, and inventories of forestry, game, and water resources. Documents associated with establishing image analysis systems are also included.

The fourth series, Landsat imagery, contains lithographs of RBV (return beam vidicon) images, primarily illustrating the classification of Tacoma land use intensity and Portland census tracts.

The fifth series contains the entire set of the Pixel Facts newsletter, which provided updates on Landsat project activities from 1975 to 1979.

The sixth series includes miscellaneous papers not filed with specific programs.

**Note**
Acronyms List

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AASPO</td>
<td>Applications Aircraft Support Program Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>APT</td>
<td>Application Pilot Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASVT</td>
<td>Application Systems Verification and Transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCT</td>
<td>Computer Compatible Tape</td>
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</table>
CIRSS: California Integrated Remote Sensing System
EODMS: Earth Observation Data Management Systems
ERIM: Environmental Research Institute of Michigan
EROS: Earth Resources Observing System
ERSAL: Environmental Remote Sensing Applications Laboratory
ERSS: Earth Resources Survey Operational System
ERTS: Earth Resources Technology Satellite
ESL: Electromagnetic Systems Laboratory, Inc.
ESM: Earth Sensing Mechanisms
GES: Goddard Earth Science (NASA)
GIS: Geographic Information System
JPL: Jet Propulsion Laboratory
JSC: Johnson Space Center (NASA)
LAP: Landsat Applications Program
LRIDP: Land Resources Inventory Demonstration Project
LUMIS: Land Use Management Information System
MATE Van: Mobile Analysis and Training Extension Van
MSS: Multispectral Scanner System
NASA: National Aeronautical and Space Administration
NAPP: Northwest Agricultural Policy Project
NOAA: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OMB: Office of Management and Budget
OSU: Oregon State University
PNRC: Pacific Northwest Regional Commission
PNW: Pacific Northwest
RBV: Return Beam Vidicon
STC: Stanford Technology Corporation
T3F: Technology Transfer Task Force
TAP: Technology Advancement Program
TMS: Thematic Mapper Simulation
USGS: United States Geological Society
UW: University of Washington
VICAR/IBIS: Video Image Communication and Retrieval/Image Based Information System
WRAP: Western Regional Applications Program
WSU: Washington State University
WSUCSC: Washington State University Computing Service Center

Arrangement of the Donald E. Wilson Earth Resources Survey Program Papers

The papers are arranged into six series, chronologically, by region and function:

I. Applications Aircraft Support Programs Office (AASPO), 1972-1976
   1. Aircraft Earth Resources Technology Satellite Support, 1972-1976
   2. Land Use, 1973-1974

II. Pacific Northwest (PNW) Region, 1975-1983

III. Land Resources Inventory Demonstration Projects (LRIDP) / Landsat Applications Program (LAP), 1976-1982
   3. Idaho State, 1974-1981
IV. Imagery, 1975-1980


VI. Miscellaneous Files, 1976-1982

I Applications Aircraft Support Programs Office (AASPO) 1972-1976

Physical Description: 7 folders

Series Description

This series is arranged into two subseries: aircraft support of the ERTS and land use. The first subseries, Aircraft Earth Resources Technology Satellite Support, contains plans outlining the development of a cost-effective survey system utilizing NASA aircraft support of the ERTS program. The AASPO was based at Ames, which was assigned as the lead center to plan, integrate, coordinate, and review the application and utilization of aircraft support resources. Of interest is the inclusion of a *Nature* article entitled “ERTS - Technological Success, Scientific Failure?”

The second subseries, Land Use, contains records regarding land use, including workshop information and maps from the U.S. Department of the Interior and the USGS, as well as NASA review meeting minutes from 1974.

II Pacific Northwest (PNW) Region 1975-1983

Physical Description: 52 folders

Series Description

This series is arranged into three subseries concerning activities spanning the Pacific Northwest Region. Each subseries is arranged in chronological order.

The first subseries, Pacific Northwest Regional Commission Reviews, contains primarily high-level reviews of projects, including proposals, plans, budgets, reports, and presentations. These include evaluation criteria for considering potential projects, as well as users’ reflections on their experiences.

The second subseries, Technology Transfer Task Force (T3F), is significantly smaller and contains records with a more limited scope, focusing on specific T3F activities, including meeting minutes. Notably, the T3F received the “Public Service Achievement Award” from NASA on October 20, 1981 in recognition for its work managing over twenty projects with more than thirty agencies and helping users successfully acquire operational capabilities.

The third subseries, Reviews for NASA Headquarters, consists of reviews for NASA headquarters. These consisted predominantly of presentations for Alexander J. Tuyahov, Chief of the Space Applications Development Branch, regarding geographic information systems and the Alaska ASVT. Of particular note is the NASA headquarters’ Landsat study review, including “Lessons Learned.”
III Land Resources Inventory Demonstration Projects (LRIDP) / Landsat Applications Program (LAP) 1976-1982

Physical Description: 100 folders

Series Description
This series contains the bulk of the collection. The projects are arranged into subseries by state and discipline, including, urban planning, forestry, and range inventory. Within these groupings, the files are ordered chronologically.

The first and largest subseries contains documents relating to Washington State. Overarching LRIDP reports and LAP proposals are presented first, followed by projects covering urban development in Tacoma and the Puget Sound region, Columbia River Basin ASVT, and U-2 surveys of the Mount St. Helens disaster assessment following its eruption on May 18, 1980. The last project folder includes an article questioning the involvement of federal agencies in basic research. The establishment of the Washington State University Computing Service Center is also documented.

The second subseries relates to projects in the state of Oregon. Its subdivisions begin with LAP proposals, along with forestry, range, and other smaller projects. The third subseries covers Landsat projects in Idaho.

The fourth subseries contains consortium agreements with universities in Oregon and Washington.

The fifth subseries relates to the development of operational facilities with Landsat data analysis capabilities within the Pacific Northwest states. This included visits from the MATE (Mobile Analysis and Training Extension) Van, which was equipped with data processing equipment, and support from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) for the implementation of VICAR/IBIS (Video Image Communication and Retrieval / Image Based Information System). Manuals and vendor contracts are also included here.

IV Imagery 1975-1980

Physical Description: 13 folders

Series Description
This series contains Landsat imagery categorizing land use in Tacoma, Washington and Portland, Oregon. It also includes, to a lesser extent, Landsat images from other projects, such as inventories of Ada County, Idaho agricultural lands, and Snake River, Idaho irrigated lands. The series also includes lists of Landsat scenes, photographs of Landsat data analysis facilities, and a U.S. Landsat coverage map. Folders are arranged alphabetically by title.


Physical Description: 6 folders

Series Description
The fifth series contains Pixel Facts, a bimonthly newsletter that described the activities, results, and status of projects related to the transfer of Landsat data analysis capabilities to federal and commercial users. This series is arranged chronologically.

VI Miscellaneous Files 1976-1982

Physical Description: 6 folders

Series Description
The sixth series contains miscellaneous material not filed with specific programs and is comprised of papers presented at a remote sensing symposium, an article on sampling methods with a bibliography, memos, and correspondence. Of note is a letter regarding concerns about the accuracy and verification of Landsat data. This series is also arranged chronologically.

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IV. Imagery 1975-1980

Box 10, Folder 7  Portland Imagery undated
Box 10, Folder 9  RBV Imagery 1978
Box 10, Folder 10  Regional Census Tract, Landsat Classification 1976
Box 10, Folder 11  Tacoma Imagery circa 1977
Box 10, Folder 12  Washington Landsat Scenes 1977-1978


Box 10, Folder 13  Newsletter, Pixel Facts (1 of 2) 1975-1977
Box 10, Folder 14  Newsletter, Pixel Facts (2 of 2) 1978-1979
Box 10, Folder 15  Proposal to Develop Pixel Facts Newsletter circa 1979
Box 10, Folder 16  Pixel Facts Contract 1979-1980
Box 10, Folder 17  Pixel Facts Letters 1981
Box 10, Folder 18  Pixel Facts Correspondence 1981

V. Miscellaneous Files 1976-1982

Box 10, Folder 19  Correspondence 1976-1978
Box 10, Folder 20  Memos 1978
Box 10, Folder 21  Eleventh Symposium on Remote Sensing ERIM April 1, 1977
Box 10, Folder 22  Sampling Statistics (General) January 1978
Box 10, Folder 23  Per Diem Rates 1979
Box 10, Folder 24  Letters 1982