#### PRECISION AG 2.0 Conference February 11-12, 2014 — Calgary, Alberta, Canada

### **Precision Agriculture's Bold New Era:**

A Brief History, Current Expression and Radical New Directions



...this presentation investigates the legacy of <u>Precision Ag's unique expression of Geotechnology</u>, its current challenges, and its probable future directions

Plenary address by Joseph K. Berry

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(See <u>http://www.innovativegis.com/basis/present/PAconf\_Calgary2014/</u> to access support materials including PowerPoint)

# Geotechnology as a Mega-Technology

**Geotechnology** is one of the three "**mega -technologies**" for the 21st century and promises to <u>forever change how we conceptualize</u>, <u>utilize and visualize</u> spatial relationships in scientific research and commercial applications (U.S. Department of Labor)



# **Historical Setting and Evolution of Precision Ag**

**Precision Agriculture** is a "site-specific management" technology that <u>measures and responds to the spatial</u> <u>and temporal intra-field variations</u> for maximizing crop production while preserving resources.

PA's development is closely aligned with Geotechnology (RS, GIS, GPS) and Robotics (intelligent implements).

#### Computer Mapping (70s Where)

The Large Area Crop Inventory Experiment (LACIE) was the first large scale remote sensing project in agriculture demonstrating that improved accuracy in predictions of wheat production can be achieved by the use of <u>satellite imagery</u>. LACIE experimenters used Image analysis techniques to



predict with great accuracy the size of the 1977 Soviet wheat crop six weeks prior to harvest.

...foundational research in Machine Processing of Remotely Sensed Data



#### Spatial Database Management (80s Where is What)

The raging debate in GIS at the time was **Discrete Spatial Objects** (*Vector*) vs. **Continuous Map Surfaces** (*Raster*). Since the vector perspective more closely matched manual map-making and applications, it dominated GIS. But vector maps are of little use in farming and GPS

was too inaccurate/ unreliable, so <u>Precision Ag was stymied</u>. **Map Algebra** that identified a set of grid-based primitive operations in a GIS allowing two or more geo-registered raster layers to produce a new raster layer using <u>algebraic operations</u> such as addition, subtraction etc. By sequencing these primitives operations, a **Cartographic Modeling** process analogous to solving equations is developed— it's just that the <u>variables are entire map layers composed of thousands of numbers</u>.

...technological advances improving Spatial/Temporal Resolution in RS and GPS

# **Historical Setting and Evolution of Precision Ag**

**Precision Agriculture** is a "site-specific management" technology that <u>measures and responds to the spatial</u> <u>and temporal intra-field variations</u> for maximizing crop production while maintaining good land stewardship.

PA's development is closely aligned with Geotechnology (RS, GIS, GPS) and Robotics (intelligent implements).

#### Map Analysis (90s Why and So What)

Map Algebra concepts were extended by a more rigorous mathematical/statistical framework (**Map Analysis** and **GIS Modeling**) and additional grid-based analytical capabilities were developed. The raging debate in early Precision Ag circles was **Management Zones** (Discrete/Aggregated/Vector)

#### "Farm Maps as Data"







versus **On-the-Fly** (Continuous/Disaggregated/Raster). As GPS, satellite/aerial imaging and image processing became more precise, reliable and available, <u>continuous data and</u> processing approaches won out. With sub-meter positioning, hyperspectral detail and advanced



grid analysis tools, Precision Ag moved from a research and innovation dominated field to a promising megaindustry. Networks of high-end workstations and desktop computers replaced old mainframe computers.

...the pieces begin to fall into place and Adolescent PA Grows Up



#### GeoWeb and Mobile Devices (00s Wow!!!)

The modern computing environment has radically changed from "stay-at-home" computers to <u>powerful portable devices</u> with <u>high speed connectivity</u> (e.g., mobile phones, pads, tablets and notebooks). Cloud storage/computing provides access to vast amounts of GIS and RS data and processing.

...like a perfect storm, the Precise Alignment of RS, GIS, GPS, Analytics and Robotics continues to fuel PA innovation and adoption (Berry)

## GIS Development Cycle (...where we've been)





The lion's share of growth has been GIS's ever expanding capabilities as a "<u>Technical Tool</u>"

...corralling vast amounts of spatial data and providing near <u>instantaneous</u> <u>access</u> to remote sensing images, GPS navigation, interactive maps, records management, geo-queries and awesome displays.

#### But keep in mind-

...PA is about doing the **right thing** at the **right place** and at the **right time** 

...it identifies and responds to variability within a field

...it <u>augments</u> indigenous knowledge (not a replacement)

# Some Examples of Soaring PA Technology Applications

#### 1) LiDAR Imaging vs. RTK GPS (terrain surface)

LiDAR for regional/state-wide surveys RTK GPS for farm-level survey LiDAR and RTK for multistage terrain analysis



Tom Buman's Precision Conservation blog at http://precisionconservation.com/



#### 2) Automated 3D Machines (controlling positioning/hydraulics)

Field Grading to level a field Optimal Field Tile placement Variable-rate Seeding (depressions)





http://www.fao.org/docrep/t0231e/t0231e08.htm/

#### 3) Remote Sensing Imagery and Drone Technology

Remote Sensing: Satellite and Hyperspectral Imaging for crop development

Drones:

**Geometric registration** for Farm/Compliance Mapping **Spectral analysis** for Field Scouting **Possibly** for Spot Spraying (Future)



http://www.specterra.com.au/precision\_agriculture.html



# More Examples of Soaring PA Technology Applications



(Berry)

# Yield Limiting Factors (the basis of PA)

Water Weather Topography Nutrients Weeds Pests Genetics Seeding Rate Other...



#### Candidate factor for Precision Agriculture and Site-specific Management <u>if and only if</u> —

the factor is a <u>significant</u> driving variable it has <u>measurable</u> spatial variability its <u>spatial variation can be explained</u> and spatial relationships established it exhibits a <u>spatial response</u> to practical management actions

...<u>and</u> results in <u>production gains</u>, <u>increased profitability</u> and/or <u>improved</u> <u>stewardship</u>

# Whole Field vs. Site Specific Management





Ζ2

...but PA is all about disaggregated spatial relationships/patterns—

#### **Research Opportunity**

<u>Continuous</u> Map Surfaces break the field into small consistent pieces (grid cells) that track specific conditions at each grid location

Management action varies continuously throughout the field



irregular sub-fields



## Data Analysis Perspectives (Data Space vs. Geographic Space)

### **Traditional Analysis**

(Data Space — Non-spatial Statistics)

### Map Analysis

(Geographic Space — Spatial Statistics)



#### Identifies the **Typical Value**

# **Grid-based Map Analysis Approaches**

Map Analysis involves three broad types of "Analytical Tools"—

Surface Modeling maps the spatial distribution of point-sampled data

- Map Generalization— characterizes spatial trends (e.g., tilted plane)
- Spatial Interpolation— continuous spatial distribution (e.g., IDW, Krig)
- Other— roving windows and facets (e.g., density surface, tessellation)

#### Spatial Statistics investigates the "numerical" relationships in mapped data

- **Descriptive** aggregate statistics (e.g., average, stdev, similarity, clustering)
- Predictive— relationships among map layers (e.g., regression)
- Prescription— appropriate actions (e.g., decision rules, optimization)

#### Spatial Analysis investigates the "contextual" relationships in mapped data

- Reclassify— reassigns map values (e.g., position, value, shape, contiguity)
- > Overlay— map layer coincidence (e.g., point-by-point, region-wide, map-wide)
- Distance— proximity and connection (e.g., movement, optimal paths, visibility)
- > Neighbors— roving windows (e.g., slope, aspect, diversity, anomaly)







(P,K,N)

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## Geographic Distribution (Mapping the Variance)

The "<u>iterative smoothing</u>" process is similar to slapping a chunk of modeler's clay over the "data spikes," then taking a knife and cutting away the excess (successive smoothing) to leave a <u>continuous surface</u> that encapsulates the peaks and valleys implied in the field samples



## Spatial Interpolation (soil nutrient levels)

**Spatial Interpolation** maps the **geographic distribution** inherent in data sets



# **Comparing Spatial Interpolation Results**



Comparison of the IDW interpolated surface to the whole field Average shows large differences in localized estimates (-16.6 to 80.4 ppm)



Comparison of the IDW interpolated surface to the Krig interpolated surface shows <u>small differences</u> in localized estimates (-13.3 to 11.7 ppm)

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Point Samples (P.K.N) Interpolated Surface (Phosphorous Layer)

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# **Visualizing Spatial Relationships**

#### Interpolated Spatial Distribution



What spatial relationships do you see?

...do relatively high levels of P often occur with high levels of K and N?

...how often?

...where?

<u>Humans</u> can only "see" broad

**Generalized Patterns** 

in a <u>single</u> map variable...



# **Clustering Maps for Data Zones**

...but <u>computers</u> can "see" detailed patterns in <u>multiple</u> map variables (using Data Space)



...groups of "floating balls" in data space identify locations in the field with similar data patterns– <u>Data Zones</u> (Data Clusters)

...or a <u>Continuous Equation</u> precisely identifying the right action for each grid cell

## The Precision Ag Process (Fertility example)



...the process is more generally termed <u>Spatial Data Mining</u> and is used in a host of applications from *Geo-busines*s to *Epidemiology* to *Infrastructure Routing* to *Wildfire Risk Modeling* ...etc.

and is analogous to non-spatial "Quantitative Data Analysis" — but uses "Map Variables"

# So Where Are We in Precision Ag?

Yield Mapping ...done deal for many crops

**Soil Nutrient Mapping** ...procedures need validation

Mgt Zone Mapping ... alternative approaches need study & validation



### **Map Analysis and Modeling**

The Full Precision Farming Process ...a fair piece to go

IF < condition> THEN < action> ...based on spatial relationship "rules"

- **Description** (Where is What) ...coming on line (Mapping)
- PA Research Nugget
  (Why and So What) ...needs lots of work (Inference)
  (Science)
- **Prescription** (Do What Where) ...barely on the research radar (Optimization)
- Action (Precisely Here) ...done deal for many farm inputs (location aware Robotics)

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(P,K,N)

## Micro Terrain Analysis (a simple field erosion/pooling model)

Determining Erosion/PoolingPotential:

**Slope** classes (1= Gentle, 2=Moderate, 3= Steep)

and <u>Flow</u> classes (1= Light, 2=Moderate, 3= Heavy Flows)

...are combined into a single map identifying erosion/pooling potential



## Precision Conservation (compared to Precision Ag)



## Deriving Erosion Potential (regional scale)

Maps of surface <u>Flow</u> confluence and <u>Slope</u> steepness are calculated by considering relative elevation differences throughout a project area



## Calculating Effective Distance (variable-width buffers)

**Effective erosion buffers** around a stream expand and contract depending on the erosion potential of the intervening terrain



## Water Conservation Modeling (Conservation = "wise use")



Grid-based <u>Map Analysis/Modeling</u> of consumptive water needs and optimization to increase farm revenue based on <u>New/Expanded Instrumentation</u>:

#### Water Flow Measurements — Evapotranspiration Monitoring — Soil Moisture Measurements — Remote Sensing





http://www.regenmg.com/Home.aspx Su

Sustainable Water and Innovative Irrigation Management (SWIIM) (Berry)

## GIS Development Cycle (...where we're heading)



## Where To Go From Here...

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Now that precision agriculture is entering its third decade, where are we? Yield mapping is commonplace for many crops and locales. Site-specific management of field fertilization has a large and growing number of users. Remote sensing applications are maturing. Irrigation control, field leveling, variable rate seeding, disease/pest modeling, stress maps and a myriad other computer mapping uses are edging over the horizon. However, it is important to keep in mind that site-specific farming isn't just a bunch of pretty maps, but a set of new and evolving technologies and practices that link mapped variables to appropriate management actions. These revolutionary approaches are ushering in such radical changes as a shift in agriculture research from a historical emphasis on traditional experimental

fields to "on-farm" research/studies; a mounting interest in "as applied" mapping of sensitive field inputs; a movement from traditional multivariate statistics to knowledge engines that assess patterns and relationships within and among map layers; and detailed modeling of agricultural flows and cycles that extends precision agriculture to "precision conservation." This presentation investigates the legacy of Precision Af's unique expression of Geotechnology, its current challenges and probable future directions.

#### ..... Online References:

- Beyond Mapping Compilation Series is an online compilation of Beyond Mapping columns appearing in GeoWorld magazine 1989 to 2013 with many addressing Precision Ag topics. http://www.innovativegis.com/basis/BeyondMappingSeries/
- Making a Case for SpatialSTEM: Spatial Considerations in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education, is a white paper describing a framework for grid-based map analysis and modeling concepts and procedures as direct spatial extensions of traditional mathematics/statistics. http://www.innovativegis.com/basis/Papers/Other/SpatialSTEM/SpatialSTEM\_case.pdf
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Joseph K. Berry is a leading consultant and educator in the application of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology. He is the principal of BASIS, consultants and software developers in GIS technology and the author of the "Beyond Mapping" column for GeoWorld magazine for twenty five years. Since 1976, he has written more than two hundred papers on the theory and application of map analysis techniques, and is the author of the popular books <u>Beyond Mapping, Spatial Reasoning</u>, <u>Map</u> Analysis and GIS Modeling. He has been writing, teaching and consulting in Precision Ag for over fifteen years. Dr. Berry holds a B.S. degree in forestry from the University of California, Berkeley, a M.S. degree in business management and a Ph.D. emphasizing remote sensing and land use planning from Colorado State University.

www.innovativegis.com/basis/basis/cv\_berry.htm

#### www.innovativegis.com/basis/

#### Online References



**Breakout Session** 

Returning the Scientific Horse to in Front of the Technical Cart ...a math/stat framework for Map Analysis

#### Analyzing Precision Ag Data

...downloadable book with hands-on exercises



**Beyond Mapping Compilation Series** 

...Beyond Mapping columns appearing in GeoWorld magazine from March 1989 through December 2013 Organized into four downloadable books



#### **Presentation handout**