

Spotlight – Kern Council of Governments (from the September 2013 CSDC Network News)

The Kern Council of Governments (COG) was formed in 1967 when the County of Kern and its eleven incorporated cities entered into an agreement to:

1. Provide a forum to study regional problems of concern to different governmental entities in Kern County;
2. Streamline governmental operations through member government cooperation and by pooling common resources;
3. Identify, clarify and plan for solutions to regional problems;
4. Develop regional plans and policies and perform area-wide planning duties;
5. Facilitate cooperation and agreements among local governments for specific projects, interrelated developmental action and common policies with respect to common problems.



The Kern Council of Governments was one of the original affiliate members of the California State Data Center when the program was formed in 1978. In addition to Kern COG's census duties, they are responsible for several regional planning functions, including:

- Preparing the Regional Transportation Plan which will guide the development of the area's transportation network well into the future. Plans for roads, highways, railroads, pipelines, as well as pedestrian and bicycle facilities are described for both existing and future facilities.
- Coordinating the regional transportation planning with the Air Quality Maintenance Plan / Nonattainment Area Plan, and for determining unmet transit needs within the Kern region. In addition, Kern COG administers the Transportation Development Act (TDA).
- As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Kern COG is responsible for implementing the comprehensive transportation planning process for the urban Bakersfield area. An integral element of the planning process is the Overall Work Program's (OWP) annual adoption.

The OWP is designed to clarify the planning process and contains a detailed narrative of all Kern COG planning activities, as well as related planning responsibilities of local, state and federal governments. The OWP serves as the basis for applications for state and federal funding.

Kern COG is required to annually develop and endorse the Regional Transportation Improvement Program.

- The Federal Reserve Board has designated Kern COG as the central depository for bank mortgage residential loan reports. Kern COG is required to provide public access to the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act information.
- Kern COG's Board doubles as the Kern Motorist Aid Authority Board of Directors and is authorized to finance, operate and maintain a motorist aid call box system in coordination with Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol.
- In cooperation with Caltrans, Kern COG administers the region's rideshare program which helps employers and commuters reduce the number of single occupant vehicle trips. Staff educates employers on Transportation Demand Management strategies and provides commuters with potential car and vanpool match lists. A reduction in the number of single occupancy vehicle trips plays a significant role in the transportation control measure portion of the Air Quality Attainment Plan.
- Kern COG is responsible for preparing the Regional Housing Needs Assessment. The plan addresses housing needs for all income levels in the Kern region. Need is based on the market demand for housing,

local employment opportunities, the availability of suitable sites, public facilities, commuting patterns, and population projections for the region. Using census data, Kern COG evaluates these criteria and determines the existing and projected housing need for the region, in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development.

About Kern COG Staff

Peter Smith manages the Data Center program for the agency. Peter graduated from the University of Utah with a Bachelor of Science in Geography and a Certification in Planning. He has been with Kern COG since 1988.



Peter skiing at Cerro Catedral, Patagonia, Argentina.

Trying to determine what the data user will do with census information is important in assisting people. Many users have little or no experience using Census data and are not aware of what type of information is available and where to get it. When data were stored in huge volumes, his function was like that of a monk consulting the Oracle. Now, with everything in the “cloud”, if he were to lose his index finger, he might be out of job since he would not be able to click the mouse!!

New census programs, such as the ACS, solve some of the timeliness issues of census information, but the lack of detail often frustrates end users. Particularly frustrating is the lack of detailed income information that serves as the basis of many funding programs. Specifically, the huge margin of error often reported on income estimates renders the reported figure unreliable.

Outside of work, Peter enjoys bicycling and hiking. He follows the Los Angeles Dodgers but admits that sometimes he has to turn the TV off because he cannot bear to watch when things go wrong. Peter is married to the former Janet Yanke of Stockton and they have one daughter who will graduate from engineering school in 2014.

Peter enjoys traveling and recently visited South Australia. A trip to Argentina is planned for November 2014.