ASPRS Update to Lidar Data Exchange Format Standard

ASPRS (MD, USA) has released version 1.1 of the ASPRS Lidar Data Exchange Format Standard (LAS). This binary data exchange format is an industry standard for the exchange of lidar data between various hardware manufacturers, software developers, data providers and end users. The LAS format is primarily intended to make the exchange, manipulation, analysis, and storage of lidar data faster and easier. In addition, a standardised lidar data format helps to facilitate the processing, editing and visualization of lidar data in a wide variety of commercial and proprietary software packages. The format is a public binary file format that is a replacement for the proprietary systems or a generic ASCII file interchange system used by many companies in the past.

The ASPRS Lidar Committee maintains the LAS format through its LAS Working Group. The original version of the LAS format was released in May 2003. As part of its on-going review, the LAS Working Group proposed an interim update of the standard to address several minor issues and provide clarification to the original documentation. After input was solicited from various industry stakeholders, a change document was submitted to the full committee for review and the revisions approved at its March 7th meeting.

The LAS Working Group will now focus on a full version update of LAS to V2.0. Topics to be covered in V2.0 include optimisation and revision of the existing format, inclusion of additional data such as RGB values, the potential for waveform encoding, the extension to cover other diverse data formats such as manufacturerâ€™s comprehensive outputs and the potential to have the LAS format cover lidar data from terrestrial (ground-based) laser scanners as well. At the request of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), the Working Group will also investigate the potential to use the Advanced Authoring Format (AAF) as a wrapper for .LAS data. This would allow much easier integration and exchange of integrated data sets (lidar + something else) as well as provide other benefits to government users such as NGA. The ASPRS Lidar Committee is planning to review and release V2.0 in early 2006.

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