

As a result of considerable discussion at the 2011 ASPRS Annual Conference, USGS has reversed its original decision to discontinue film camera calibration. The full text of the USGS announcement follows:

USGS Will Continue to Provide Film Camera Calibration Services

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) recognizes that the mapping and remote sensing service provided by the film camera continues to provide significant value to the government and industry. The USGS also understands the coincident value of continuing the film mapping camera calibration service that it has been providing at the USGS Optical Science Laboratory (OSL) for almost four decades. Based on the current, extensive feedback advocating that the OSL continue operation beyond 2012, the USGS has decided to pursue procurement options to buy additional glass calibration plates and extended the OSL calibration service capability beyond 2012.

Each OSL calibration process requires a minimum of two specially-made, film-coated, optically-flat glass plates. In 2005, the American Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) helped the USGS find one available supplier that could make these glass calibration plates to the required specification, and the USGS purchased a supply of calibration plates. In 2010, the current supply of these calibration plates was estimated by the OSL at a level to remain in service until approximately the end of 2012. At that time, USGS consideration was given to restocking the glass calibration plates, but it was determined that the OSL did not have sufficient income to procure additional glass plates.

As part of the consideration regarding continuing operation of the OSL, the USGS initiated two efforts; 1) a cost evaluation based on the OSL cost recovery, fee for service business model, and 2) development of a Request for Information (RFI) to determine the current use and need for film mapping cameras and associated calibration requirements. As a result, the USGS completed the cost recovery evaluation, implemented the appropriate OSL fee increases, and completed the RFI in early 2011 concerning the need for film mapping cameras and calibration. The RFI resulted in a total of only 34 respondents, of whom 62% wanted the OSL to remain open; the responses indicated that its closure would have a negative impact on their business.

On April 27, 2011, the USGS Land Remote Sensing Program (LRSP) and the Earth Resources Observation and Science (EROS) Center made the decision to close the OSL when the current supply of glass calibration plates becomes depleted in late 2012. The decision was made due to insufficient funding necessary to procure glass calibration plates and the limited number of RFI responses, indicating that the film camera mapping market was declining. The decision to close the OSL, when the current glass calibration plate supply was depleted, was announced to the aerial mapping community during the May 1-5, 2011 ASPRS Spring Conference in Milwaukee, WI.

Following the intent to close announcement at ASPRS, the USGS received significant feedback from numerous film camera owners, film camera customers and businesses, State Departments of Transportation, ASPRS members, and many others indicating a strong need to continue film camera calibration services beyond 2012. Additional discussions also indicated that the USGS could potentially make incremental purchases of glass calibration plates over the next two years with existing funding, thus enabling continued operation of the OSL beyond 2012.

Therefore, the USGS will work to restock the OSL glass calibration plate supply to keep this important film camera calibration service operational, thus, ensuring the continued use of film mapping cameras to meet government requirements. If you have questions, or desire further information, please contact Mr. Greg Stensaas at stensaas@usgs.gov, or visit the USGS OSL website at: http://calval.cr.usgs.gov/calval_osl/.