

USGS Announces “No USGS Digital Camera Certification Requirement”

Optical Science Laboratory (OSL) Will Continue Film Camera Calibration

SIOUX FALLS, SD — August 15, 2011 — On May 23, 2011, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) released a public statement about the continued operation of the USGS Optical Science Laboratory (OSL). The statement was released to the American Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS), the Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS), and USGS OSL customers.

“... 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 (to) extend the OSL calibration service capability beyond 2012. ...”

Advancements in the Digital Aerial Camera Industry

An increasing number of aerial imagery vendors are moving away from film cameras to cameras based instead on digital technology. Some in the aerial camera industry have long advocated that the OSL calibration of film cameras be revamped so that the OSL develops the capability to perform a calibration/certification of digital-based aerial cameras. However, USGS recently underwent a change in its mission scope and has decided not to provide certification of digital camera technologies. The December 2010 USGS Headquarters decision stated that the USGS is neither an advocate nor a certification governing body for digital camera technologies. A natural outcome of this revised USGS mission definition is that there will no longer be certifications for digital aerial cameras; therefore, any Government contract with the potential of using a digital aerial camera should remove the USGS certification requirement from their contractual language.

The revised USGS mission also concentrates its resources on the broader topic of remote sensing technologies research. The USGS is planning a course-of-action to maintain expertise and to add value to the digital remote sensing technologies used in Federal agencies, Government at all levels, and industry.

Advancements in the Remote Sensing Technology Industry

In support of the evaluation of remote sensing technologies, the USGS has established USGS National Test Ranges in SD, MO, CO, and NC, with an additional range planned in western NY. These ranges are designed to facilitate geometric evaluation of remote sensing technologies from infrared and visible optical aerial and satellite sensors. The ranges can also be enhanced to support evaluation of geospatial and radiometric comparison of sensors, and to evaluate additional remote sensing technologies, such as Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) and Synthetic-Aperture Radar (SAR).

USGS Research Plans in Remote Sensing Technologies Arena

Another decision resulting from the December 2010 USGS Headquarters digital camera technologies review was the stated goal for USGS to be well educated and on the leading edge of as many remote sensing technologies as current resources allow. Consequently, USGS will begin in 2012 to perform a cyclic trade study on the remote sensing technologies of interest to the USGS and to other Federal agencies and as they relate to remote sensing science applications. Of the remote sensing technologies available, an evaluation process called Independent Sensor Evaluation (ISE) will be completed. The primary criterion for the selection of a remote sensing technology and completion of an ISE is that the remote sensing technology be of direct impact on USGS or related Federal agency science applications. Ultimately, and based on resources and partnerships, the USGS will then use augmented USGS National Test Ranges to evaluate the remote sensing technologies for given applications via the ISE process.

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Visit the USGS OSL website at: http://calval.cr.usgs.gov/calval_osl/