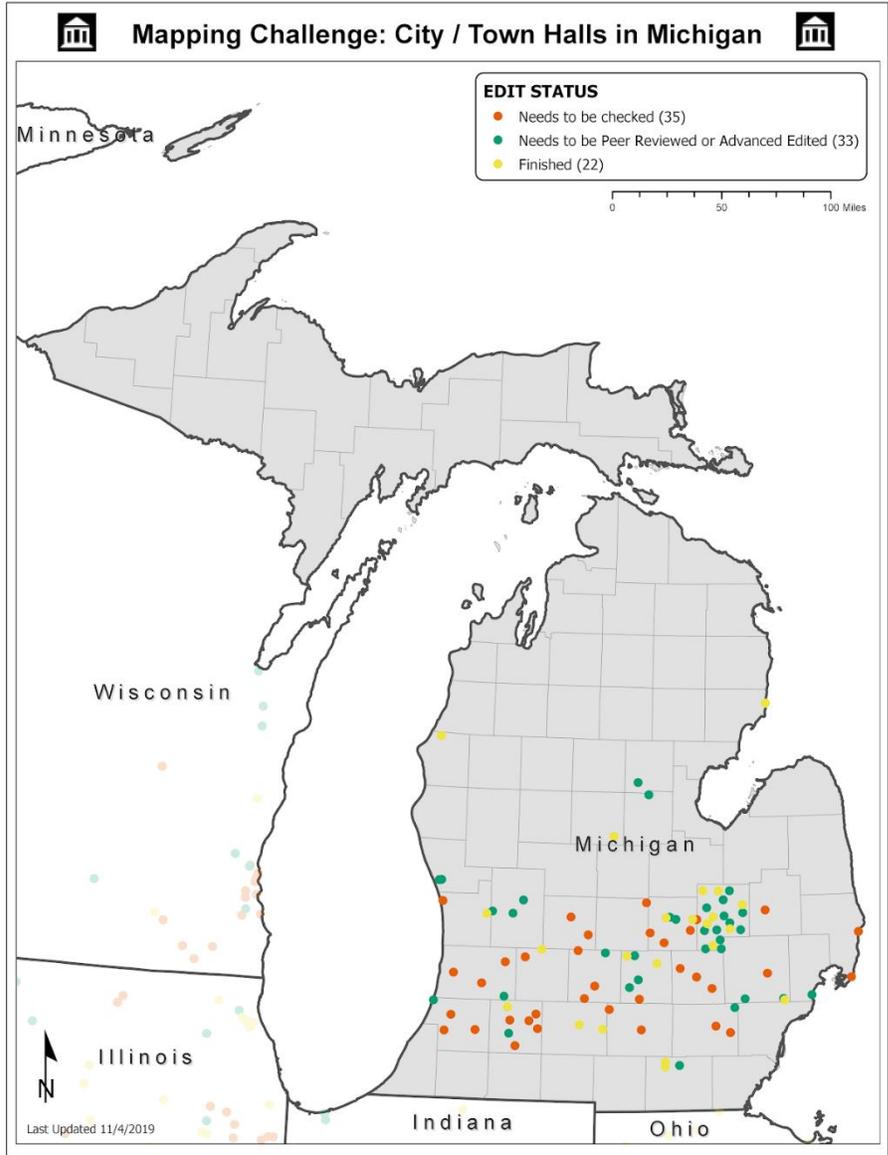


Mapping Challenges Updates



Be sure to check out our [new mapping challenge](#) focused on city and town halls in Michigan! This challenge is running concurrently with another [mapping challenge for city/town halls in Ohio and West Virginia](#).

Thank you to the volunteers who recently participated in our Michigan Lightning Challenges! Ten volunteers edited 764 unique points for our Michigan schools and cemeteries challenges:

Bill Schlatter
dcubua
JoanMCameron
Mechille
naclark05

Peregrine
rgaster
superlemur
Sunny
trmosher



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Check out the new [TNMCorps Mapping Challenges](#) page for detailed summary results of each challenge.

New Interactive Challenge Map

We've been hard at work to bring you a new and improved interactive web map for the monthly mapping challenges. The new [TNMCorps Interactive Challenge Map](#) is an [ArcGIS Online](#) mapping application and while the layout looks a bit different, we hope you will find the new interface easier to use.

When you first click on the mapping challenge link, this is what you will see.

Main Toolbar

When you first access the site, the Details tab will be selected.

The Details section is turned on by default and tells you what the interactive web map is and provides resources that can be useful when editing features.

When you select a different tab, this side panel will change to reflect the requested information.

Continue reading to learn more about the other tabs.

When you click on a point, you'll see a pop-up box that provides you with a link to the editor. When you click on this link, you'll be directed to the same point in the TNMCorps editor.

TNMCorps Interactive Challenge Map
City / Town Halls in Ohio and West Virginia

Legend Layers Basemap gallery Details Share

Details

Welcome to the TNMCorps Interactive Challenge Map!

This site displays active mapping challenge data and is designed to help volunteers find data that needs to be edited and to help them track the progress of active mapping challenges.

Click on the Legend Tab to see what each point represents. To turn layers off and on, click on the Layers list.

New to The National Map Corps? Check out our [home page](#) for more information. Visit our [Mapping Challenges Page](#) for more information about current challenges

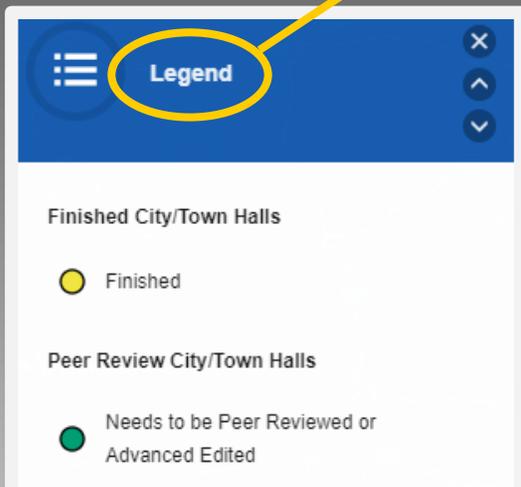
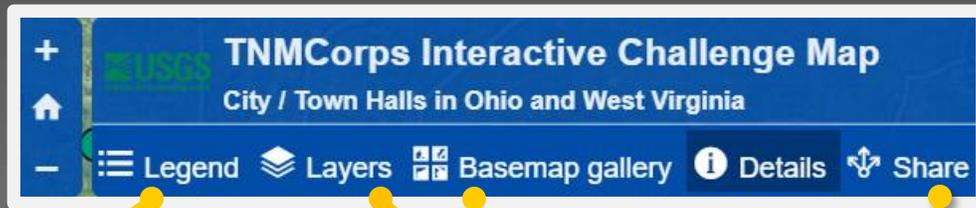
Blendon Township Hall

Link to Point [More info](#)

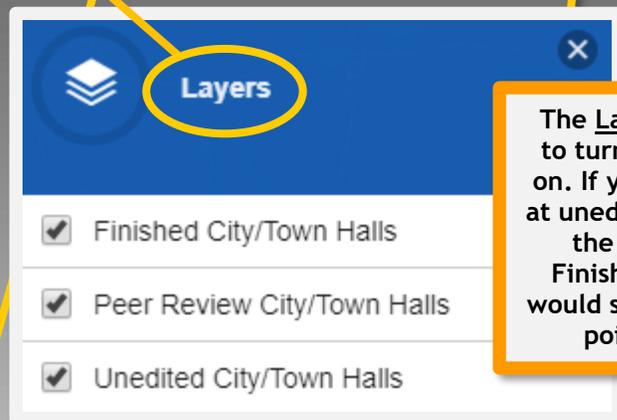
Zoom to

New Interactive Challenge Map (Continued)

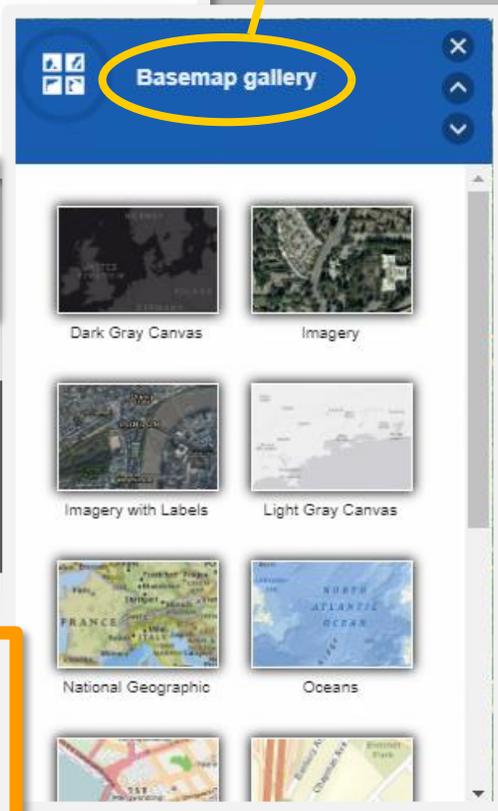
From left to right on the main toolbar you have Legend, Layers, Basemap Gallery, Details, and Sharing capability. If you click on a tab, that selection will turn dark blue to denote it has been selected.



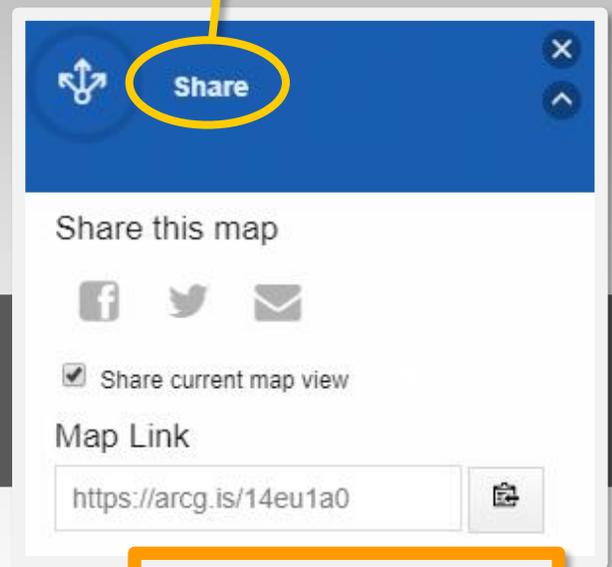
The **Legend tab** explains the edit status of each colored point.



The **Layers tab** allows you to turn each layer off and on. If you want to just look at unedited points, unselect the Peer Review and Finished Layers and you would see just the unedited points on the map.



The **Basemap gallery tab** brings up a list of basemaps that you can choose from when looking for points to edit.



The **Share tab** generates a URL that you can share with anyone who may be interested in editing for The National Map Corps. You can share on Facebook, Twitter, by email, or by sharing the link to the application!

Middle of Nowhere, Center of Everywhere?

As we've mentioned, we sometimes make interesting discoveries while editing data. One such recent discovery was a [small monument](#) near Lebanon Kansas marking the [geographic center](#) of the contiguous United States, and perhaps Lebanon's main [claim to fame](#). But who determined this and how? Some of you may already know the answer, but it's still a fascinating bit of geographic history!

In [1918](#), a group of scientists from the [U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey](#) decided that figuring out the [geographic center](#) of the lower 48 states would be a neat thing to do. But making such a calculation in 1918 wasn't exactly a piece of cake. Since math is hard, the inventive scientists of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey instead took a rather rudimentary and questionably scientific approach: They made a cardboard cutout in the shape of the contiguous United States and balanced this cutout on a pin.

The point at which the cutout balanced on the pin was determined to be the geographic center. As you can imagine, there are a [number of issues](#) with such methodology, mainly that the earth isn't flat, shorelines change, and topography hadn't been accounted for. Nevertheless, in 1941, the [Lebanon Hub Club](#) decided to erect a monument commemorating this discovery. Since the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey's original estimation placed the center on a privately-owned hog farm, the monument was instead built about a half mile away as a convenient roadside attraction.



And then...

In [1959](#) Alaska and Hawaii joined the Union, which meant Lebanon Kansas was about to get some competition. The geographic center of the now 50 United States was [resurveyed](#) and estimated to be about 500 miles northwest of Lebanon near [Belle Fourche](#), South Dakota. And since no small town would resist capitalizing on such notoriety, Belle Fourche also built its own geographic-center-of-the-United-States [monument](#).

Lebanon, KS

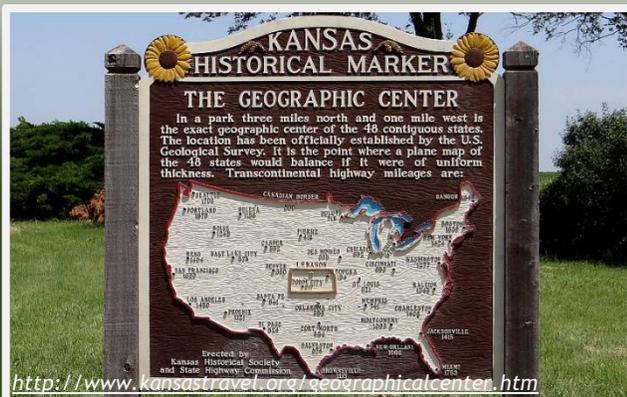


<http://www.kansastravel.org/geographicalcenter.htm>

Belle Fourche, SD



<https://www.travelouthdakota.com/trip-ideas/story/middle-it-all>



<http://www.kansastravel.org/geographicalcenter.htm>

If you've had the chance to visit either or both of these monuments, [send us](#) a note or a photo, we'd love to hear about it!

Blast from the Past: Past Newsletter Articles

Have you ever enjoyed perusing through an old photo album while relishing memories? Doing so is often enlightening because it puts into perspective how far you've come, or how much you've changed! TNMCorps did something similar earlier this year while migrating all of our newsletters to a new platform (check it out [here](#)). In doing so, we got to comb through each article that TNMCorps has written. Here are some of our favorites:



TNMCorps in History

- Did you know that TNMCorps was once titled [Earth Science Corps](#)?
- Here's an [article announcing the launch of our current editor](#)
- TNMCorps once partnered with FEMA during its [Collaboration in a Disaster: TNMCorps-ER](#) project

Volunteer Contributions

- Volunteers reach [100k](#), [200k](#), [300k](#), and [400k points](#)

Tiered Editing and User Roles

- Here are some articles describing our tiered editing roles: [Peer Reviewer](#) and [Advanced Editor](#), an [overview of a point's border colors](#), and [why points created by a Peer Reviewer turn green \(not blue\)](#)

Tips and Tricks

- Tips and tricks for [Post Offices](#), [Moving vs. Deleting Points](#), [Amish Schools](#), and [Technical Community Colleges vs. Trade Schools](#).
- This article provides insight on [How to spot an Authoritative Resource](#)
- [USGS Historical Topographic Maps](#) are another helpful tool available to volunteers.

We also asked each of our team members what their favorite past newsletter article is:

EMILY

My favorite article has to be ["Taking a Bite out of History: Hinsdale County Courthouse"](#) from the [May 2018 newsletter](#). This article was a bit of a departure from our usual content, but it was fun to write and serves as a reminder that the features we collect aren't just dots on a map. Many of them have fascinating histories, and all of them play important roles in our communities!

ERIN

My favorite articles tend to be those submitted by our volunteers, and articles profiling interesting places and things people have found while editing. Although it isn't very far in the past, one of my favorite articles is ["\(P\)awesome TNMCorps Members"](#) from our [September 2019 newsletter](#). As a huge animal-lover, I was thrilled to hear that we have some pooches sleuthing out cemeteries in Rhode Island. Although we are quite familiar with Cgibson's terrific contributions to TNMCorps, we were previously unaware of the furry assistants.

RACHEL

My favorite article is titled ["Words From The Wise"](#). Written by our longtime volunteer, moletrapper, this article was featured in our [June 2016 newsletter](#). I love hearing from editors about what they are learning and what they are doing to make editing easier. In this article, moletrapper mentions that the best information for confirming school points would come from three sources. First the school website itself, second the school district, and lastly the state department of education. These are good things to remember when editing school feature types!

SAM

I really like the ["How to Spot an Authoritative \(Re\)Source"](#) article from the [November 2017 newsletter](#) because it uses the game of Telephone as an analogy to explain why we strongly emphasize authoritative resources in our feedback emails.

American Fact Finder Tutorial

City and town halls have been gaining a lot of momentum lately for TNMCorps, which is awesome because the USGS has started adding these features to our US Topo revisions. Since we started with very little seed data, we need our volunteers to help us collect these features!

When it comes to identifying which cities, villages, and/or townships exist in a state, there are several sources available. Some of the more reliable sources come from governing entities such as a state's official website. Each time TNMCorps launches a challenge for city/town halls, we try to provide our volunteers with a list of these resources as a starting point.

Another source we like to use for identifying governing entities in each state is the Census Bureau's [American FactFinder](#). To conduct their decennial counts, the Census Bureau thoroughly researches all the communities in each state and categorizes them into different types of geography. TNMCorps volunteers can use these geographies to 1) identify which governing entities exist in a state and 2) serve as a list of communities to research.

Here is a quick overview of how to use American FactFinder to research community websites:

1. Go to American FactFinder:

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

The screenshot shows the American FactFinder homepage. A red box highlights the URL above. A purple arrow points from the URL to the 'ADVANCED SEARCH' link in the top navigation bar, which is circled in cyan. Below the navigation bar, a list of options is shown: 'Community Facts', 'Guided Search', 'Advanced Search', and 'Download Center'. A red box highlights the 'Advanced Search' option, and a purple arrow points to it. A 'SHOW ME ALL' button is also visible.

2. Click on "Advanced Search" and then click on "SHOW ME ALL".

The screenshot shows the search interface of American FactFinder. A red box highlights the 'Geographies' option in the 'Search using the options below:' section, with a purple arrow pointing to it. A red box highlights the '3. Click on "Geographies" on the left.' instruction. A yellow box with the number '1' is next to the instruction 'Enter search terms and an...'. A yellow box with the number '2' is next to the instruction 'Next, select Geographies ('. The interface also shows 'Your Selections' (empty) and 'To search for tables and other'.

American Fact Finder Tutorial (Continued)

4. For “Geographic type,” select “Place (160).” This will include all incorporated places as well as census designated places (CDPs). *Optionally, when selecting a geographic type, you can choose *Economic Places (E60) or †County Subdivisions (060).*

5. Select a State. Depending on the type of geography selected, you may also have to select a county.

6. This will generate a list of geographic areas that fit the specified search criteria. This list may serve as a starting point to search for authoritative websites. Copy the name of the geographic area and paste it into an internet search engine to research the community’s website.

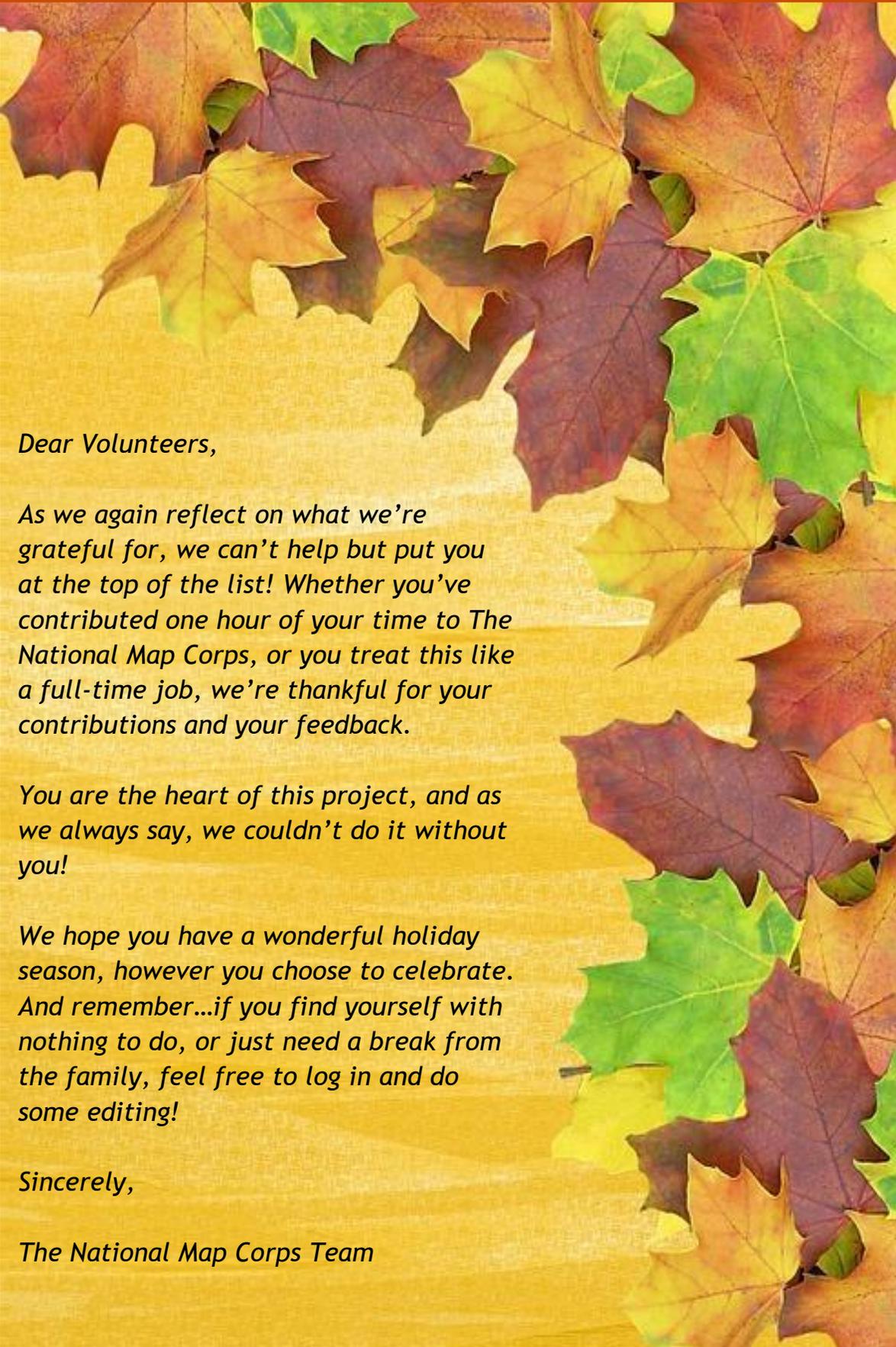
7. Optional: Highlight one of the geographic areas in the list and then click “About this Geography.” This generates a pop-up dialog which provides a statistical overview of each area. The dialog-box also has a tab showing the community boundary for each area. It also makes it easy to copy the name of the geographic area and paste it into a search engine for researching the community’s website.

*Economic Places (E60) include incorporated places, CDPs, independent cities, towns, and townships.
 †County Subdivisions (060) will list all unincorporated places (e.g., townships) by county.

8. For more information on each geography type, FactFinder has a “Glossary” in the upper right-hand corner of its website that provides a thorough definition of each type.

This **“Intro to Geographies Tutorial”** also describes what each geographic type represents.

Happy Holidays!



Dear Volunteers,

As we again reflect on what we're grateful for, we can't help but put you at the top of the list! Whether you've contributed one hour of your time to The National Map Corps, or you treat this like a full-time job, we're thankful for your contributions and your feedback.

You are the heart of this project, and as we always say, we couldn't do it without you!

We hope you have a wonderful holiday season, however you choose to celebrate. And remember...if you find yourself with nothing to do, or just need a break from the family, feel free to log in and do some editing!

Sincerely,

The National Map Corps Team

Have a story or photo you'd like to share?

We want them! This could be anything from a photo of you verifying a structure or an interesting story that you discovered while editing.

Photos, graphics, and stories may be used in future news releases and social media posts. All materials submitted become part of the “[public domain](#),” and can be used by USGS in the future unless otherwise specified.

Please email them to nationalmapcorps@usgs.gov



New Recognition Category Members



Squadron of Biplane Spectators
(6000-6999)



Ring of Reconnaissance Rocketeers
(5000-5999)



Family of Floating Photogrammetrists
(3000-3999)



Flock of Winged Witnesses
(4000-4999)

- genovt



Theodolite Assemblage
(2000-2999)



Alidade Alliance
(1000-1999)

- Old Dad



Stadia Board Society
(500-999)



Circle of the Surveyor's Compass
(200-499)

- JoanMCameron
- Vy Phan Tuong Le

- JoanMCameron
- Vy Phan Tuong Le
- yyhu0202
- rgaster



Pedometer Posse (100-199)

- JoanMCameron
- alex_frese
- yyhu0202
- Vy Phan Tuong Le
- jadams007
- rgaster
- StephanieSmith
- mapChica



Society of the Steel Tape (50-99)

- JoanMCameron
- MYuchniuk
- yyhu0202
- jluckhardt
- rgaster
- JS126
- Vy Phan Tuong Le
- JB1301
- mapChica
- dcubuia
- Vexillophile
- DevOpp
- EMWOODWARD



Order of the Surveyor's Chain (25-49)

- DevOpp
- JoanMCameron
- MYuchniuk
- yyhu0202
- Cesar B Otavalo
- Daniel Haskins
- alex_frese
- Vy Phan Tuong Le
- jflye
- dcubuia
- Corp Of Discovery
- heidimarie
- mapChica
- JB1301
- ScottMc
- Vexillophile
- Anton Guo
- JS126
- Sunny
- kenny.buckenmeyer

CONTACT US AT: nationalmapcorps@usgs.gov for suggestions, questions, additions to the next newsletter, or if you would like to be removed from the email list.

