

TIMES WEST VIRGINIAN

Fairmont firm lands 9-year, \$200 million NOAA contract GST, as part of joint partnership, will deal with weather-related data

By Mallory Panuska
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FAIRMONT — A Fairmont high-tech firm was awarded a multi-year federal government contract Wednesday that will assist in the archiving and disseminating the latest and most secure weather and climate data.

Global Science & Technology Inc. and its joint venture partnership, Diversified Global Partners JV LLC, announced the \$200 million contract with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for the next nine years. For fiscal year 2008, the deal is worth nearly \$2.8 million, and it will be used to develop and maintain the Comprehensive Large Array-data Stewardship System (CLASS) over the next decade.

Right now, the West Virginia division of GST is under contract with NOAA. GST vice president and general manager Brian Bell said this contract was initiated a few years ago and added that GST has been involved with NOAA for at least the last decade working on this type of data.

CLASS is designed to support NOAA's Satellite and Information Service by archiving and disseminating weather-related data. Vital weather, climate and environmental information will be collected and distributed from a new GST location at the I-79 Technology Park.

"NOAA is responsible for collecting data about weather and climate that comes from all kinds of different sensors and observation methods," Bell explained. "The CLASS system gives the means to archive and distribute that data. (It takes) high technology related to information technology to create a system that actually ingests the data, processes the data and delivers the data via the web to all the people who use that data."

Bell said the primary users of this data are the federal government and universities studying climate variation and change. And now that the contract has been renewed, Bell said there will be much more information and data that will be collected and distributed over the next decade. Because of this, even more local stakeholders will be able to take advantage of the information, including those in the private and business sectors.

"I think that the importance of this is that it will provide a foundation for Global Science & Technology to continue to do business and grow right here in West Virginia," Bell said. "It is further evidence that small businesses in North Central West Virginia, and more specifically along the I-79 high technology corridor, are capable of proving this level of expertise for these large government contracts."

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Currently, the CLASS database holds 8.3 million archived files, with weather observations dating to the 1890s. Bell said one of the most interesting aspects of it is that it includes Thomas Jefferson's actual hand-recorded data.

Dignitaries including Gov. Joe Manchin III, First District Congressman Alan Mollohan, D-W.Va., and Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., also applauded the recent contract between GST and NOAA, according to a series of press releases provided by GST.

“Global Science & Technology and its joint venture partnership is the right choice for the continued success of the CLASS program,” Manchin said in the press release. “Global Science & Technology has long supported West Virginia’s economy by creating many high-tech jobs, and by winning this major contract, they are proving to be a worldwide leader in the field of managing important environmental data.”

Mollohan also made positive comments about the new contract.

“This is indeed a great moment for Global Science & Technology, its joint venture partnership, and the CLASS team working in Fairmont,” he said in the press release.

“It is not only important for the company, but for those of us who share the vision that West Virginia is at the forefront of high-tech development. This latest achievement demonstrates that the vision is being pursued and fulfilled. I applaud the company, its joint venture and their leadership and thank them for being an important part of the vision.”

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