



Bill Steer, Master instructor of the National Green Check GPS Certification Program which was provided at the Canadian Ecology Centre (CEC) last Saturday (Dec. 9), and author of the program's manual and DVD, shows Jean Champagne, Head of Emergency Measures in Manitoba, the "magic" of a GPS unit.

**Global Positioning System the way of the future By Don Valade Mattawa Recorder Dec. 17, 2006**

"Global Positioning System – GPS is the future," said Bill Steer.

He was the instructor for the National Green Check GPS Certification Program offered last Saturday (Dec. 9) at the Canadian Ecology Centre (CEC).

Jacques Begin, Director of Community and Economic Development for the Mattawa Bonfield Economic Development Corporation (MBEDC) said, "the program is an extension of the regional adjustment committee's mandate of helping the region. It is also one way that the CEC can make available some of their resources to the community at large."

GPS units were available to all participants in the recent program, and all were used for outdoor exercises.

About 20 participants took part in the program which was developed by the National Green Check GPS Certification Program through the Canadian Ecology Centre.

One of the participants in the program came all the way from Manitoba. Jean Champagne, Head of Emergency Measures in that province will bring back what he learned to Manitoba, and the program will be implemented and incorporated into Manitoba's search and rescue protocols, because "GPS is becoming very important."

As well as being a Master Instructor of the certification program, Steer has been the Education Manager at the CEC and recently was appointed as the new General Manager of the national, non-profit, forestry science, research and education centre located within Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park.

Besides being the author of the program manual and DVD, "What do those numbers mean anyway?", Steer is the author of eight other publications, is the graduate of McMaster University, Nipissing University and Durham College, is a mapmaker, and is the creator of the concept for the CEC.

"GPS units remain one of the hottest selling items sold in outdoor retail stores," said Steer, "GPS manufacturers make an amazing product, but consumers are frustrated with numbers displayed by the GPS units and the owners' manuals."

He pointed out that the most important aspect of all training and certification is the understanding of the relationship between the map, the compass and the GPS unit. That relationship is easily explained in the program. Steer indicated that "the CEC is promoting GPS as a necessary tool to enhance personal and group safety." He added, "GPS is a technology used by industry for spatial data collection.

Many working professionals in emergency response, natural resource, education, outdoor leadership and utility sectors are looking to become trained and certified for safety reasons. No one enjoying or working in the outdoors should be without a GPS unit and satellite phone or some form of reliable communication."

Steer points out that Green Check is a program of the CEC and its foundation, and many organizations – emergency services, health units, educational institutions, First Nations, municipalities and companies recommend and have endorsed it.

As for GPS technology, "it is no longer just for hikers, the military and courier companies. It is a user-friendly technology," said Steer. It is showing up in many places – cars, safety beacons, golf carts, on bracelets attached to felons, and available to parents for their children in wristwatch form. Police would like to see GPS bracelets attached to Alzheimer patients. Geocaching, an outdoor treasure hunt using GPS is very popular. Scientists track animal behaviour through GPS collars, and there are other uses and many more to come.

For those who don't know, GPS, using satellite tracking, identifies a spatial location, a point of intersection from imaginary lines on the earth's surface. Anthony Rota, MP for Nipissing—Temiskaming, mentioned the manual developed by Steer in House of Commons debates in December of 2004, "Mr. Speaker, a new instructional manual and DVD developed in my riding will help solve the learning dilemma for many global positioning system users....this book will serve to educate paramedics, police and fire personnel, educational and outdoor leaders, as well as those working for utility companies, so the GPS technology can be used efficiently and enhance overall safety....I wish to congratulate Bill Steer on his excellent work, and would encourage anyone who spends time in the outdoors to buy a copy of What do those numbers mean anyway?"