



Welcome!

Innovative Mapping Tools to Plan for Summer

Presenter: Serena Kay Sligh



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER





Meet our Speaker!

Innovative Mapping Tools to Plan for Summer



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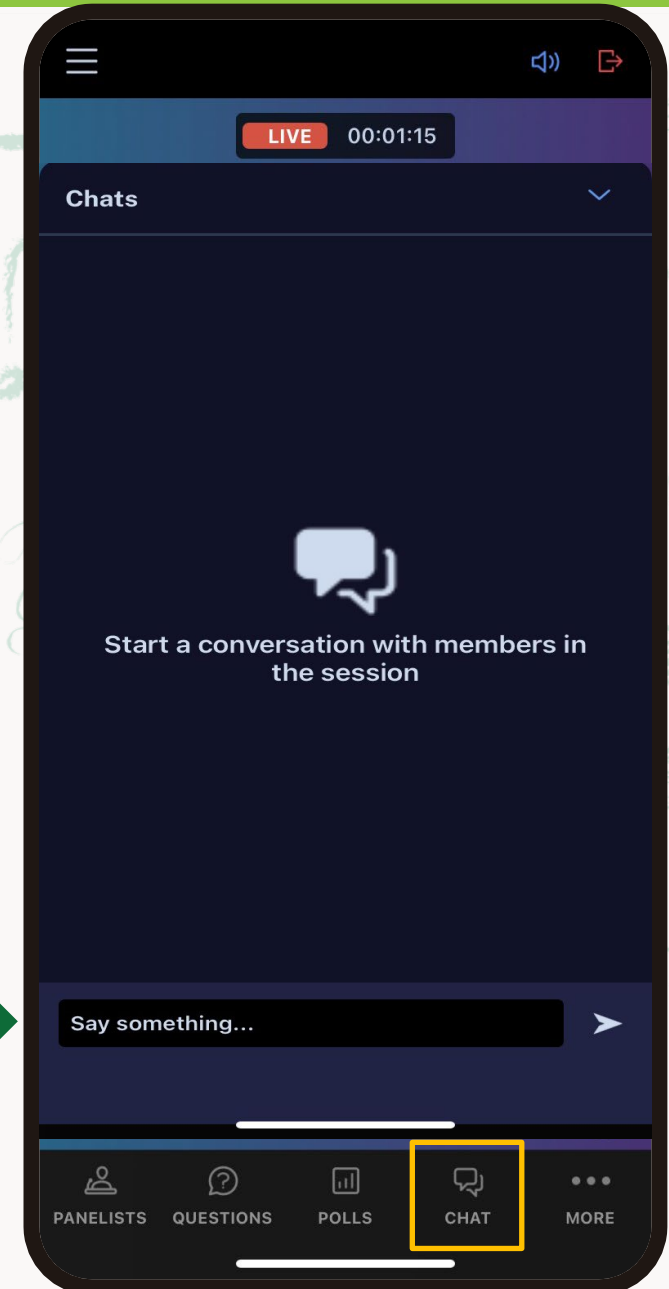
Acknowledgement Statement

You understand and acknowledge that:

- The training you are about to take does not cover the entire scope of the program; and that
- You are responsible for knowing and understanding all handbooks, manuals, alerts, notices, and guidance, as well as any other forms of communication that provide further guidance, clarification, or instruction on operating the program.



Submit ALL Questions Via The App





Session Outline

1. Background

- Non-congregate service has shown promise

2. Obstacles

- Rurality and proximity eligibility requirements

3. The Map

- Streamlining processes and providing targeted insights

4. Demo

- Using the map to determine site eligibility



Background

Congregate vs. Non-Congregate Meal Service
Advantages and Disadvantages



The Goal

*Improve Nutrition Access
For Children When
School's Out for Summer*

Summer meal programs serve a fraction of the meals paid for by the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).





Congregate Service: Pros and Cons

Advantages:

- Ensures the eligible children are the ones consuming meals.
- Easier to ensure food safety and quality.
- Provides a safe environment for children to interact.
- Easier to protect program integrity.

Disadvantages:

- School buses don't always run during summer...
- Parents can't always just drop kids off at the meal site as if it were a school, especially for multiple meal services.
- Public transportation isn't always an option, especially in rural areas.





Non-Congregate (NC) Service: Pros and Cons

Advantages:

- NC operations improve the site accessibility and safety.
- Distribution days/times can be tailored for the community.
- Home delivery option: Children without access to transportation can still receive meals.
- Grab-and-Go option: Multi-day issuance means fewer trips to sites and flexibilities for parents/guardians to pick-up meals.

Disadvantages:

- Harder to ensure that the kids are the ones eating the meals.
- Challenging to track the number of meals served and eaten.
- Higher risk of non-compliance, e.g. duplicate meal distribution.





Obstacles

Application Volume and
Eligibility Verification in Texas



Ensuring Site Eligibility

Proximity limit:

- A non-congregate site must not be within proximity to another summer site.
- Texas selected a proximity limit of 2 miles.
- Exceptions were granted on a case-by-case basis
- e.g. Travel distance > 2 miles, non-concurrent meal service

Rural requirement:

- Site must be located in a USDA-defined rural area.
- Federal regulation limits non-congregate feeding to rural areas to expand access in underserved areas.





Processing Applications for Summer 2024

Total Applications:

- Texas is a big state... [Fig. 1]
- For summer 2024, TDA reviewed ~4,800 summer site applications in about 3 months.

Non-Congregate Applications:

- TDA planned for 500 applications, approximately 350 applications were submitted to offer NC service.
- Eligibility must be verified for each application.
- USDA provided a map for determining rurality. ✓
- Verifying proximity limits and case-by-case exceptions would have been impossible to do manually... ✗

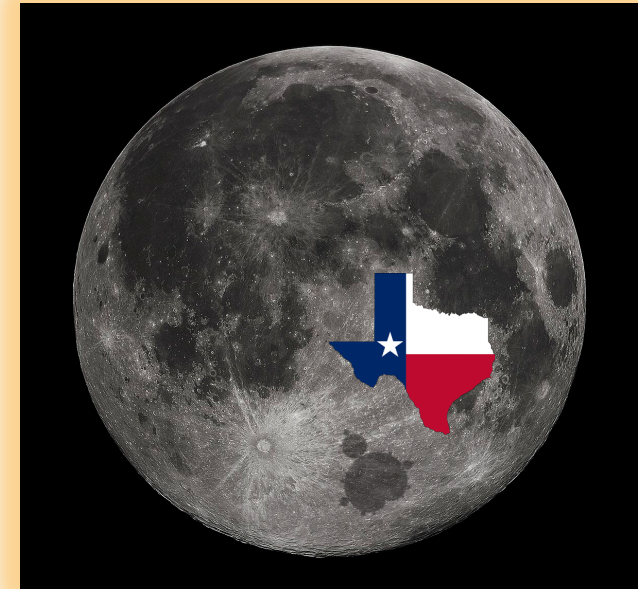


Figure 1: Texas, after being teleported to the moon (to scale)



The Map

How the Map Facilitates
the Determination of Site Eligibility



Ensuring Site Eligibility

USDA uses 6 sources defining rurality:

- Metropolitan Statistical Areas (county-level)
 - Rural-Urban Continuum Codes (county-level)
 - Urban Influence Codes (county-level)
 - Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes (census tract-level)
 - Census Blocks (census block-level)
 - NCES Locales (distance-based)
-
- Meeting just 1 of these definitions qualifies the site as rural.
 - We combined these 6 definitions into one map layer.

Site Type	Urban Sites	Rural Sites
Congregate	3,423	1,134
Non-Congregate	0	118 (2.5%)
Total	3,423 (73%)	1,252 (27%)

Etymology [\[edit \]](#)

rural + *-ity*

Noun [\[edit \]](#)

rurality (*countable and uncountable*, plural **ruralities**)

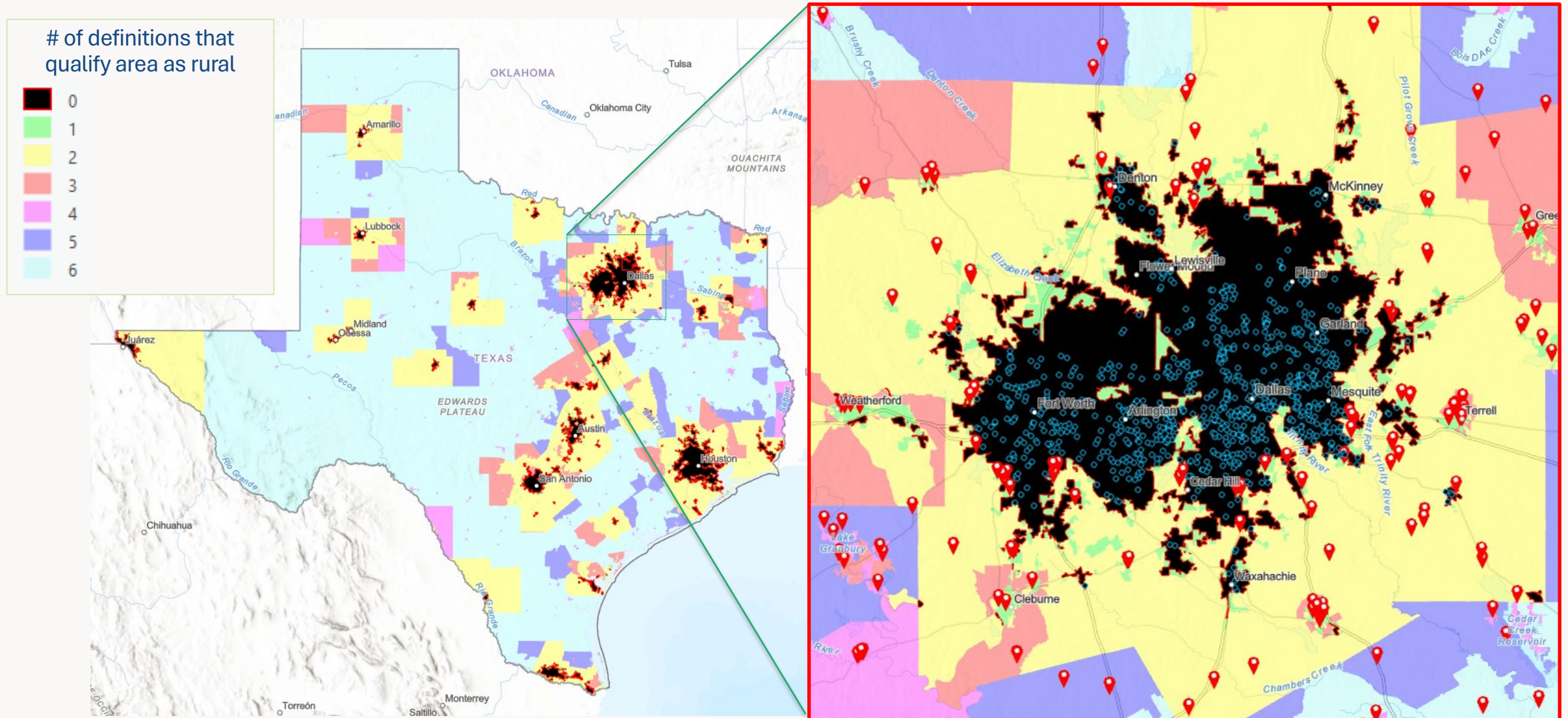
1. (*uncountable*) The state of being rural.
2. (*countable*) A rural characteristic.

Antonyms [\[edit \]](#)

- urbanity

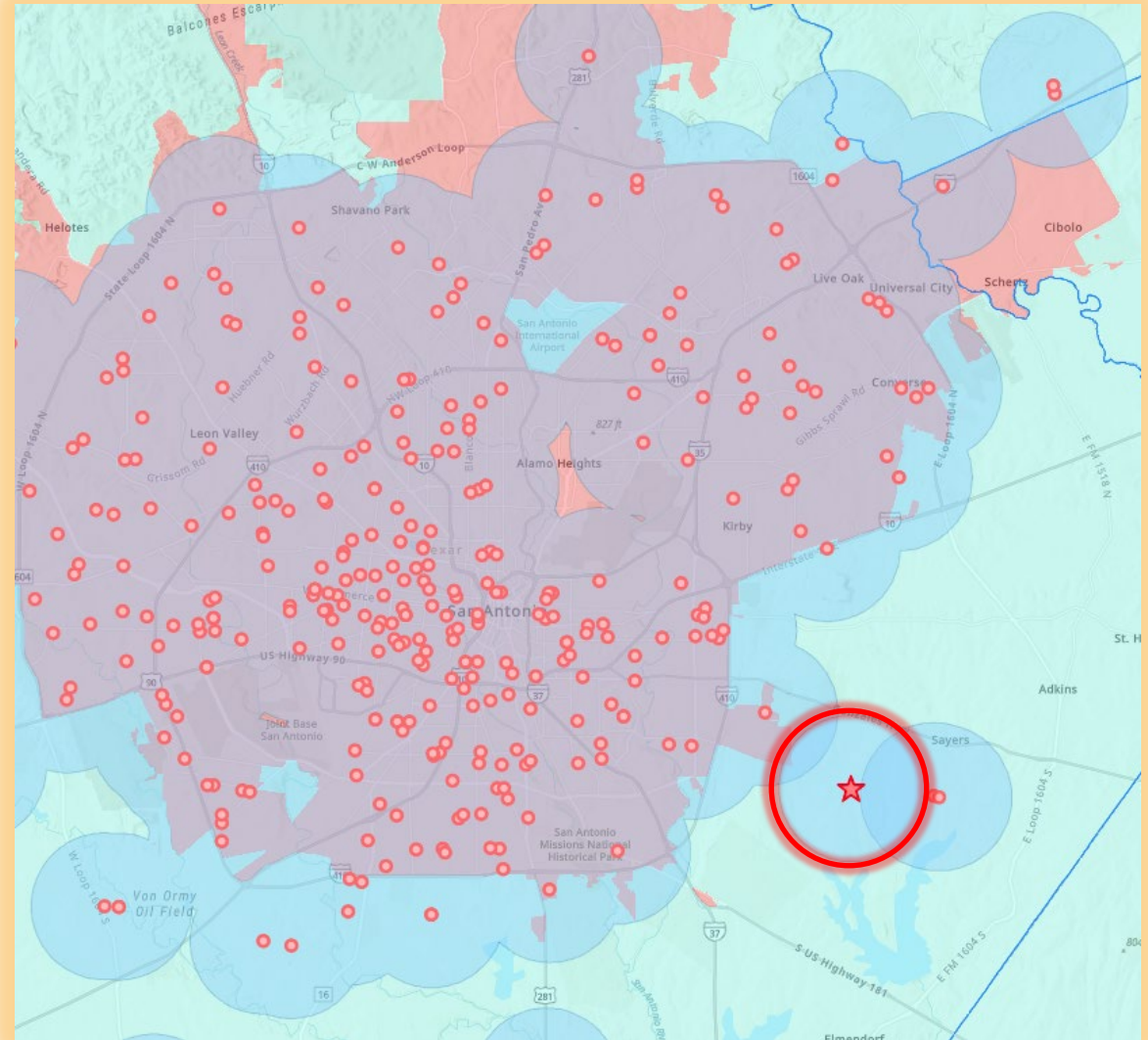


Verifying Rurality Requirements



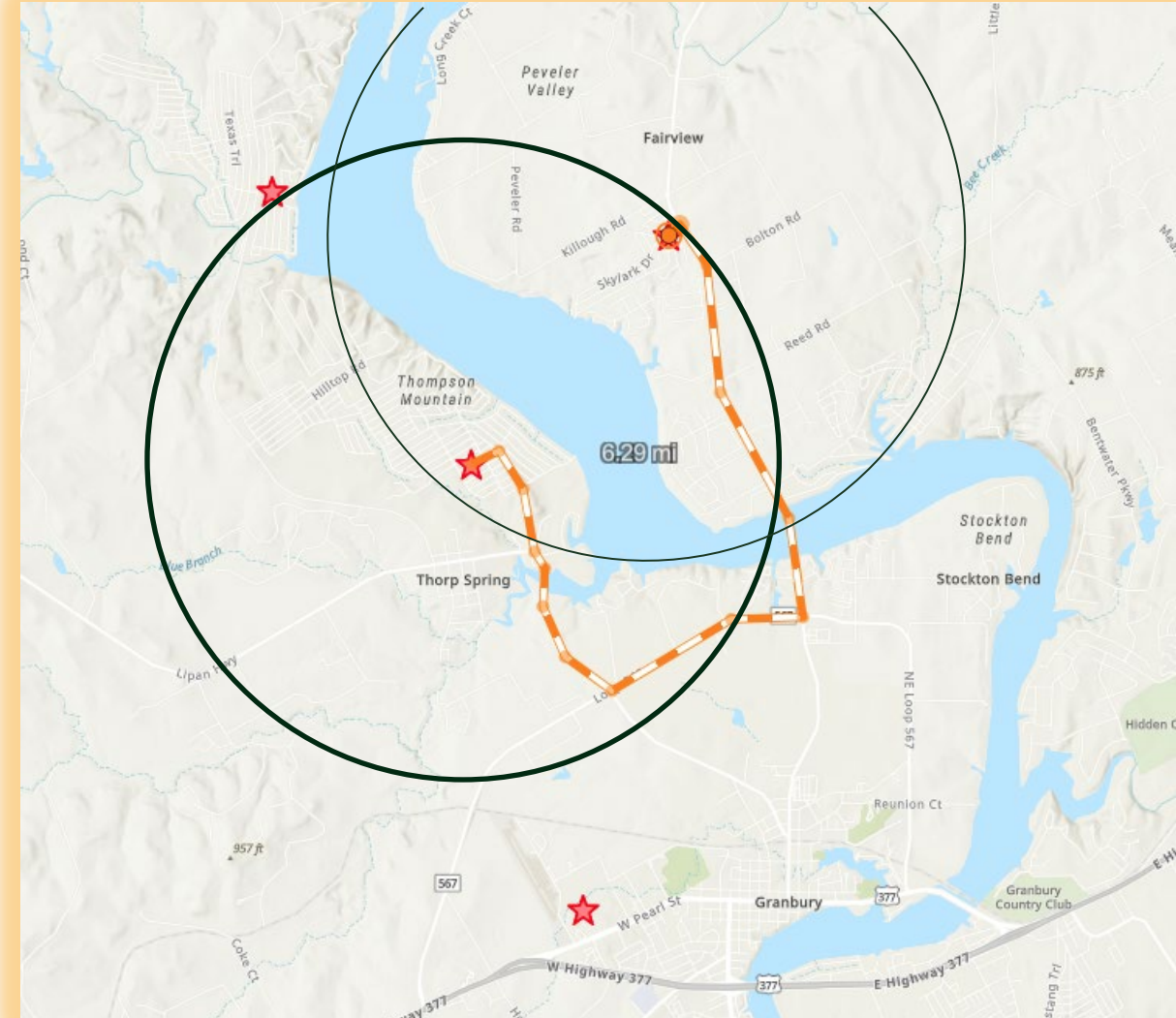
Verifying Proximity Requirements

- The map proved to be especially useful for verifying the eligibility of sites that were near urban areas.
- Many sites that applied to operate as NC were located in rural areas on the periphery of cities, where summer sites are more densely clustered.
- The map features a filter tool for identifying sites within a 2-mile radius of any location.



Verifying Proximity Req. Exceptions

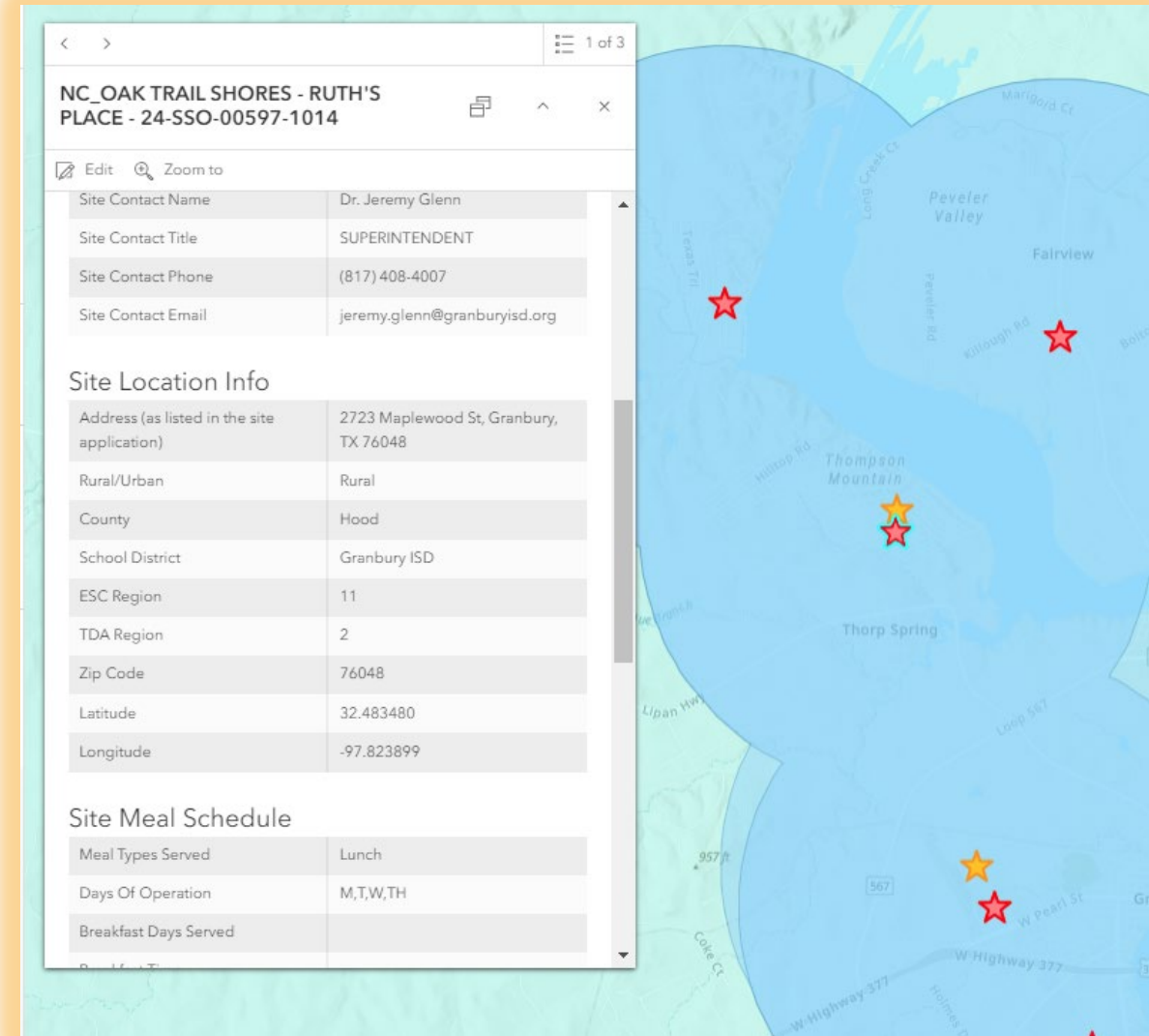
- The two sites on the right are within 2 miles of each other as the crow flies, but they are separated by Lake Granbury.
- The travel distance between the sites is actually 6.3 miles, which can be easily measured using the map's interface.





Verifying Proximity Req. Exceptions

- Exceptions could be granted in some situations where two nearby sites have non-overlapping meal service schedules.
- Clicking a site on the map summons a pop-up with the site's meal schedule information, facilitating the verification process.
- The map also includes an operation date range filter to show only sites operating during a given time period.





Recap of Benefits

Benefits to TDA

- **Minimizes application processing time.**
- Enables the simultaneous verification of proximity and rurality requirements.
- Facilitates the determination of case-by-case exceptions to the proximity rule due to non-overlapping meal schedules.
- Minimizes the probability of human error in determining site eligibility.
- Maximizes the likelihood of NC application approval.
- Minimizes time spent writing out justifications for application rejections.

Benefits to Sponsors

- **Eliminates the need for sponsors to submit applications blindly for all their summer sites.**
- Enables sponsors to identify which of their existing sites were most likely to be eligible.
- Saves sponsors time when submitting NC applications.
- Provides transparency to sponsors for any NC applications which were rejected.



How much time did the map save?

- The map saved an estimated ~20 minutes per NC site application.
- Our Program Eligibility Team processed ~350 NC site applications.
- Altogether, the map saved their team about 120 hours of work.

But that's not even factoring in the time it would have taken to verify that each site meets the proximity limit requirement...

"I'm not even sure we can use a time metric. Without the RNC map, there's no way that I would've been able to identify nearby sites for which to calculate proximities. The RNC map was absolutely critical to the review process."

- Geoff Horni, Director of Program Eligibility





Demo

See the [Map](#) in Action





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2:03 95%

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Session feedback

1. Session Rating *

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

2. The content is relevant to my current role and applicable to my daily work

☐ Agree
☐ Disagree

3. I feel confident in applying the knowledge gained in this presentation. *

☐ Agree
☐ Disagree

4. The presenter's delivery of the content was effective. *

☐ Agree
☐ Disagree

5. The session was engaging and interactive.

☐ Agree
☐ Disagree

6. The presenter encouraged questions and discussions.

☐ Agree
☐ Disagree



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