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Wildlife Spatial Analysis Lab

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Using satellite imagery so advanced it used to be limited only to spy agencies, the Wildlife Spatial Analysis Lab at UM is able to measure land vegetation down to about a meter's accuracy. With their database technology, they combine those measurements with studies from earth to predict a number of situations pertaining to people, land and wildlife. "Mainly, it helps us plan for the future of where we are going to expand, where people are going to build roads, malls... things like that, so we can have the least amount of impact on the environment as possible," said Shane Mason, student programmer.

Their projects include predicting wolf pack and big horn sheep habitats, water erosion, buffalo migration, wildfire land damage, effects of population growth, and wetland locations. They even predict the best places for economic growth in Montana based on commuter distance, health, recreation, education and quality of life.

"It allows people, planners and managers to do a much better job than they could in the past," said Roland Redmond, Lab Director.

Redmond works alongside other campus departments, and says their best customers are land management agencies like the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, as well as city and state government.

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