

Gmap4 might be going away

By Joseph Elfelt

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Yesterday I received an email from Google that might mean the end of Gmap4 as it presently exists.

Each time Gmap4 starts the **Google map API (Application Program Interface)** is downloaded from Google's servers to the user's browser. The API is computer code that Gmap4 uses to display maps and provide various features. Currently Google allows a domain (mine is mappingsupport.com) to cause that API to be downloaded 25,000 times per day for free. When that limit is hit the map stops working for the rest of that day unless more API downloads are purchased.

During the wildfires in California last year, Google became aware of the wildland fire map that I post on social media and curate. As a result, Google granted my domain an "uplift" to have 1,000,000 API downloads per day for free. At the time I thought that uplift would expire in a few weeks but it is still presently in place.

The email that Google sent out yesterday states that beginning **June 11** Google is slashing the free Google map API downloads from 25,000 per day to 28,000 per *month*. Additional API downloads can be purchased at the rate of \$7 per 1,000.

June 4 update. Google has delayed the start of the new rates. The new rates will now go into effect on **July 16th**.

I have traded email with Google staff on minor points. However they have not yet made a decision on my request for a sufficient allocation of free API downloads so I can keep provided wildland fire maps and other public service maps without owing Google \$\$\$ for the privilege of providing these maps.

Over the June 2nd-3rd weekend my wildland fire map was opened approximately 90,000 times due to the Ute Park Fire in New Mexico and the 416 fire in Colorado. Under Google's new pricing scheme just that one weekend would have cost me \$630 to buy 90,000 API downloads. Please keep in mind that just like every other business, Google has every right to set the price it charges for their services.

I will always provide free disaster maps that display authoritative data that is hosted on federal GIS servers. If Google declines to support my work, then I will remove the Google code from my map software and convert to using the free open-source Leaflet API. The code for that API will be hosted on my own server.

Gmap4 currently averages around 3,000 API downloads per day or about 90,000 per month. And that is at the **low end** without any spikes in API downloads caused by wildland fires, other disasters or the new GIS surfing feature that will appear in the production code later this year. Under Google's new pricing plan it will roughly cost at least \$5,000 per year for API downloads at an average rate of 3,000 API downloads per day.

Earlier today I emailed my contact at Google to inquire about the status of the uplift which currently allows my domain to have 1,000,000 API downloads per day for free. Will that uplift remain in place, be changed in some manner or go away completely? It turns out that person is out of the office so I will not get an answer until next week.

You may wonder what will happen to Gmap4 if the uplift goes away. For now, my answer is I am not going to spend time thinking about that until I hear from Google next week. Stay tuned.