

ESA Vegetation Classification Panel Meeting Notes

Part I: Thursday October 21st, 2010

Attendance:

Scott Franklin, Chris Lea, Orié Loucks, Don Faber-Langendoen, Dave Tart, Alexa McKerrow, Eileen Helmer, Bob Peet, Jill Parsons, Ralph Crawford, Bill Gould, Cliff Duke, Aysik Solomeshch, Todd Keeler-Wolf, John Sawyer, Michael Jennings, Serguei Ponomarenko

Action Items:

- **Michael** will send comments on the Veg Science Proposal to Cliff and Jill.
- **Jill** and **Cliff** will put the Veg Science Proposal into NSF format, draft a budget, and set up a call with the group of people involved to discuss the final version. Afterwards, **Jill** will also send a copy to the Panel for comment and proceed as quickly as possible.
- **Jill** will keep the Panel informed of the cost of internet access at the Panel Booth for the 2011 ESA meeting.
- **Alexa** will send Norma Fowler information on the number of people, logistics, etc for the field trip. She will coordinate with Jason and Dave Roberts to make additional plans for the trip and workshop. The proposal is due **December 2nd**.
- **Everyone** – if you have ideas for organizing a symposia at the 2011 IAVS meeting, send them to Bob. Proposals are due **November 15th**.
- **Alexa** and **Todd** will revise their webinar presentations based on the Panel's comments. With Jill's help, they will organize an in-house Panel WebEx demo and invite Mike Mulligan to sit in and review the presentation – to be scheduled in **January 2011**.
- **Michael** and **Eileen** will consider developing a webinar for citizen scientists.
- **Aysik** will send Todd a synoptic table useful for explaining diagnostic vs. dominant species to incorporate into the webinar.
- **Todd** will email the **Education Subcommittee** and schedule a call, involving Cliff and Jill and keeping Ralph in the loop, to begin planning the 2011 workshops in the USFS Agreement and identify Panel members who will lead this effort. The Committee will draft a detailed workplan for the workshops by **January**.

Brief Status Report of Vegetation Science & Workshop Proposals (Cliff)

The two proposals are essentially complete, and we view NSF as a good target for workshop one. The proposal needs to be put into NSF format and possibly shortened due to page limits. The goal is to take the first workshop proposal to NSF as soon as possible. Workshop two is the second priority, and we plan to send it to our USGS and USFS contacts.

Overview of Upper Level Changes as Decided by FGDC Subcommittee (Don)

Background: The HRWG (Hierarchy Revision Working Group) has been reestablished to consider the upper levels of the hierarchy. Extensive work on these levels has already been done in 2008, but they have been used in pilot form without being formalized since then. The HRWG now includes Carol Spurrier at BLM and an NRCS person to be appointed.

Issues: The HRWG presented two options to the FGDC Subcommittee: Option A kept the levels as already established. Option B involved creating more separation with wetland vegetation. The HRWG felt the current version was fine. Some people preferred Option B, but everyone was ok with Option A as well.

Outcome: The Subcommittee decided to keep the upper levels as originally established (Option A) and use this as a basis for future descriptions. By January 2011 the HRWG will draft descriptions and provide keys for Level 1. In January the Subcommittee will discuss a timeline for Level 2 & 3 descriptions and keys.

Discussion: The Panel was in agreement with the HRWG and the Subcommittee, emphasizing that the primary concern when developing the NVC should be vegetation structure, rather than habitat/environmental variables. Option B could be a technical version for wetland scientists who want it.

2011 Austin ESA Meeting Update (Todd, Alexa)

OOS: Don, Este and others submitted a proposal for an organized oral session (OOS) on the role of vegetation and ecosystem types in guiding ecological assessments. The talks will highlight ecoregional assessments, the condition and status of vegetation across ecoregions, and we hope to bring in climactic assessment.

Booth: We have put in a request to have a Veg Panel Booth, which will need manning during all the poster sessions. We plan to have a computer and internet access so that we can demonstrate VegBank and speak to people about the NVC. The booth is free, but we will need to pay for the internet charges.

Field Trip and Workshop: We are submitting a proposal for a one-day field trip and a one-day workshop. Participants will be encouraged to attend both. Alexa has been in contact with Norma Fowler, the logistical contact, Dave Diamond from the Missouri Rapid Assessment Project (who has agreed to co-lead the field trip), Jason Singhurst (who agreed to help in the field), and Judy Teague from the Nature Conservancy. Possible field trip locations include Balcones National Wildlife Refuge and Pedernales State Park – Jason has data for both places. Dave Roberts has agreed to help coordinate the assessment workshop.

IAVS Meeting 2011 (Bob)

There is some interest among the Panel in submitting a symposia proposal for next year's IAVS meeting in Lyon, France in June. The deadline for proposing topics is November 15th. This is an interesting opportunity to connect with European contacts and demonstrate components of the NVC.

Possible topics: highlighting partnerships, datasharing with international databases, crosswalking between the NVC and other classifications, describing the NVC's upper levels.

Interest: Serguei is interested, and may be able to attend. Bob will be there. Financing could prohibit others from attending. We could do something remotely – submit posters, for example.

Presentation and Review of Webinar Materials (Todd, Alexa)

Alexa and Todd presented materials for three webinar modules. The goal is to give participants a background of the NVC and prepare them for doing peer reviews. Module 1 is for a wide audience. Modules 2 and 3 are specifically geared towards potential peer reviewers.

We are planning to run these in Spring 2011. Some comments on the material are below, and Todd/Alexa will work on reducing their presentations to around 30 slides for each module:

Module 1: Overview of the NVC

- Incorporate some discussion of why the classification is important, its applications, and how it's useful from a user's point of view. Potential to mention keys. Focus on selling points (e.g. using VegBank to archive/share plot data).
- Take out the cyberinfrastructure slide and instead spend more time on the website and VegBank.
- More small visuals and applications to reinforce what's being said.
- This module is general – once the webinar is recorded it could be used as a launching point. It could be useful for universities.
- Possibly include a case study (e.g. here's how the NVC got used).
- We can put additional information (that we don't have time to include in the webinar) on the web and direct people to it afterwards.
- Develop a FAQ page on the NVC website to point people to.
- Think more about the audience – do we need to make this more “hip” for younger government workers who need to convince supervisors to use the NVC? For students interested in how they can use data?
- We need to think more about getting a moderator and making sure the session stays interactive.

Module 2: Overview of NVC peer review process

- Possibly include a discussion on keys and mapping to make this less theoretical.
- It's probably not useful to talk about the old hierarchy, except for very specific audiences.
- There was some overlap with Module 1 that can be taken out.
- Make use of appendices to cover details.
- Emphasize to participants that they can contribute to the development of the NVC. Ask people what data they have and discuss how it can fit into the classification. Could prime audience by asking them to prepare a slide/be prepared to discuss their data.
- Be prepared to address questions of the classification's dynamism (“when will this change again?”) Some consultants who are forced to use the NVC don't like it.
- Need slides with less words, more photos, and some additional guidance for the eye.
- Some slides need more descriptive/accurate titles.

Module 3: Walk through/ “How to” for peer reviewing group levels in the NVC

- Mention how you can get to the group level in the classification by working from the bottom or down from the top.
- Establish timeline for reviewing.
- Sell the dynamic nature of the NVC.

- Go through this webinar with Associate Editors as well.
- Start with the narrative, then go through filling out the form.

Planning for 2011 Workshops in USFS Agreement (all)

Important next steps to move this forward:

- Developing a timeline
- Firmly identifying the audience
- Getting this on people's calendars
- Reserving space
- Identifying the leaders who will help develop materials and run the workshops

Ideas: Some of these may involve rethinking the original budget assumptions and getting approval from USFS in advance:

- Logistics and getting people there:
 - Possibly trying to link this to an agency or interagency meeting, to ensure the target audience can make it (North American Wildlife Conference? Green Team? Natural Resource Managers of Military Lands Annual Conference)
 - Restructuring the format of the workshops to a briefing-like style where the facilitators would go to the agencies, or possibly doing something web-based?
- Possible targets: focusing on those agencies where we don't already have buy-in (contenders are BLM, EPA, Fish and Wildlife, Dept. of Defense). Cliff knows of some contacts at BLM who would be interested, and Carol Spurrier wants to make them more aware of the NVC.
 - DOD: Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands, Defense Contractors, DOD Legacy Program, National Laboratory Lands, Ecological Study Areas). Peter Boyce could be a valuable contact. We could also target DOD in workshops in 2012 (we have funding, but workshops not yet specified in USFS agreement).
 - Landscape Conservation Centers (LCCs) within FWS – managers of these could be receptive and possible participants.
- Audience: We need to firmly identify the audience these workshops will target. The original idea was do aim at mid-level people who may not be familiar with the NVC, but should we aim for higher up? Regional Executives could be a possibility
- We could develop materials that could be used again in the future for briefings on an ad-hoc basis.
- The sequence of the two workshops in the agreement may not matter, depending on the target agency/audience. For some agencies, one may be more appropriate than the other.