

# ESA Vegetation Panel Meeting Notes

## Wednesday, August 4, 2010, Pittsburgh, PA

### Attendees:

|                              |                  |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Dave Roberts (chaired)       | Orie Loucks      |
| Scott Franklin               | Alexa McKerrow   |
| Ralph Crawford               | Esteban Muldavin |
| Don Faber-Langendoen         | Bob Peet         |
| Hazel Gordon                 | Greg Reams       |
| Eileen Helmer                | Aysik Solomeshch |
| Michael Jennings (via skype) | Dave Tart        |
| Todd Keeler-Wolf             | Cliff Duke       |
| Chris Lea                    | Jill Parsons     |

### I. **Status Reports**

- A. Field Trip and Workshop – 11 attendees: 4 from outside the Panel/FGDC, 3 students. Stephanie Pearles (from the state park service) set up monitoring plots at Fort Necessity. Helpful to get feedback from the people outside the Subcommittee and Panel.
- B. Organized Oral Sessions (OOS) – two sessions held on Tuesday about connecting long-term vegetation studies with the NVC. Approximately 60 attendees during peak at both sessions.
- C. Poster Session – 5 posters, very successful and lots of activity – a great opportunity for people to interact with Panel members.
- D. IAVS Meeting The meeting was reduced in size because the eruption of Iceland's Eyjafjallajokull volcano kept most Europeans from attending. Next year's meeting is in Lyon, France.
  1. IAVS Journal of Applied Vegetation Science – more descriptive papers, going to be a special issue in January
  2. Biodiversity and Ecology will have a special issue – a series of short papers on veg plot databases around the world – possibility of putting one in for VegBank, end of August is the deadline.
- E. Vegetation Science Proposal – Orie handed copies of this out at the Veg Section Meeting. Demonstrates the challenge of integrating classification with something that is constantly changing. Feedback included:
  1. Title could be too broad – we may want to focus on veg classification science rather than reshaping veg science as a whole. If we focus on how classification can be used to advance the field, we could move this forward with only minor tweaking. If we focus on creating a vision for the field, we should involve the Vegetation Section.
  2. Workshop 1 could be overwhelming and tackles a lot – could easily be several workshops that unroll over a couple of years
  3. We may separate the workshops for funding purposes – WS 1 potential for NSF funding, WS 2 could be attractive to partners and other agencies.
  4. The Veg Section could help us identify a list of potential participants (NSF requires this for funding)
- F. NVC Website Prototype – Alexa is working with a contractor who is designing a document for an interim website to support NVC content, including a hierarchy viewer – will eventually need to go to FGDC Subcommittee

#### G. Thoughts Moving Forward:

1. Potential to create a summary for an *Issues in Ecology* from the OOS - Aysik will be in touch with the participants about this.
2. Possibility of building a more social event into next year's meeting, to involve more people from outside the Panel.
3. Possibility of having a travelogue with Panel members and others, sharing photos, etc.
4. *Ecosphere* (ESA's new open-access online only journal) could be a great venue for Veg Panel publications, and the Panel could potentially promote people to the editorial board who would be sympathetic to the papers we want to publish (Deb Peters is the new Ed. in Chief).
5. Possibility of hosting an IAVS meeting in the US in 5 years.
6. Re: others wanting to share and contribute plot data – people need a clean way to get data in – this deserves more investigation (possibility of getting help from DataOne – some NCEAS people are involved with this, including Bill Michener, Stephanie Hampton and Mark Schildhauer).

#### H. Action Points:

1. **Jill** will ensure the Council Meeting is put on the Veg Panel's calendar of activities to remind everyone about this next year
2. **Jill** will make the posters presented available on the Panel website
3. **Dave R** will meet with Jim McMahon (NEON) to discuss the Veg Science Proposal and opportunities to work together, and **Cliff** will pursue the same thing with NEON on the staff level.
4. We will have a small subgroup to help us build partnerships generally and in reference to the Veg Science Proposal (NEON, LTER, Harvard Forest) – to include **Dave R, Scott, Orié, Ralph** and others who are interested.
5. A subcommittee who previously reviewed the new Panel website (including **Michael, Don, Alexa, Bob, Dave T, Jill**) will review the NVC prototype website and give Alexa feedback.

## II. Panel and Executive Committee Membership

#### A. Discussion Highlights:

1. Introduction to Eileen Helmer – she works for the international Institute of Tropical Forestry; specializes in vegetation in Caribbean, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.
2. Two additional new members are Bill Gould and John Sawyer; Michael Barbour is looking for a new member from Mexico.
3. Scott Franklin is the new Veg Panel Chair (still to be confirmed by Rob Jackson, VP of Science).
4. Members rolling off this year are: Denny, Sherm, Steve and Alejandro.

#### B. Decisions:

1. Two positions will now be considered ex-officio members of the Panel: the FGDC Subcommittee Chair (currently Ralph) and the NVC Manager (currently Alexa)
2. There is no need to establish a Co-Chair – instead the Panel can have subcommittees and people to lead those subcommittees as needed
3. There was a motion to increase the Exec Committee to 6. In 30 days the Panel will be able to vote on this motion.

- C. **Action Points:** **Dave** will get in touch with Rob Jackson to ensure Bill Gould received his invitation to Veg Panel membership.

### III. Authority and Responsibility / Usability of the NVC

#### A. Discussion Highlights:

1. There was never a formal decision that there will not be a key to the NVC – but it was considered a difficult endeavor and no one accepted responsibility or volunteered to undertake it. Everyone is interested in developing tools to make the classification more useful and accessible.
2. The Panel reports to the FGDC Subcommittee in terms of the Classification. The Subcommittee has ultimate authority and responsibility, but engages with the Panel to carry out the the FGDC agenda.
3. Keys will make the NVC more useful to agencies and local classification efforts.
  - a. There are concerns about different keys and using the same names in different ways.
  - b. Possible need to have a body to monitor/approve keys, a formal way of adopting them.
  - c. There are other usability tools to investigate too.
  - d. There could be a standard key down to the group level that the Panel adopts.

- B. **Decisions:** Once the groups are all in place (approx. January 2011), the Panel will have a meeting and begin working on a key for the top three levels.

- IV. **Revisions to Panel Bylaws:** All proposed revisions were approved, with the exception of 3.4.2, which will be stricken from the bylaws since the Panel will not have a Vice-Chair. **Jill will circulate the revised bylaws to the Panel.**

### V. Planning for 2011 ESA Meeting

- A. Discussion Highlights - Possible contacts for field trip include: Judy Teague, Norma Fowler (the local arrangements chair), James Von Clay from Austin, Lee Elliott, Dave Diamond.

- B. Decisions – we plan to do the following at the 2011 ESA Meeting in Austin, TX:

1. Booth: to feature VegBank; Alexa is willing to help man the booth and be there to walk people through the technical aspects if other Panel members can help and talk to people. Booth has to be manned from 4:30pm-6:30pm, Mon-Thurs. We will likely do this in lieu of a poster session.
2. Field Trip: may involve IAVS, Veg Section, Texas Heritage Program, and/or Texas Parks & Wildlife; possibly to Edwards' Plateau (diverse, interesting vegetation, critical groundwater problems), but ultimately at a site that already has plot data. Potential for analysis workshop on Sunday – workshop and field trip would be open to everyone (don't have to attend both).
3. Organized Oral Session (OOS): on using vegetation data and assessment to guide or define planetary stewardship, possibly involving rapid condition assessment, rare communities, or long-range functionality.

#### C. Action Points:

1. **Don** and **Este** will begin working on a proposal for the OOS immediately (Due Sept 16<sup>th</sup>). **Aysik** and **Orie** are willing to help, but are tied up until September.

2. **Alexa** will begin looking for a field trip leader, contact Norma and Judy, , and contact Texas heritage to see what sites have data (deadline for workshop/field trip proposal – December 2<sup>nd</sup>)
3. At the next conference call we can discuss details about the booth (setting up internet access, who will participate, etc), and plans for the field trip and workshop.

## VI. Training and Outreach

### A. Webinar

1. A subcommittee will begin working on these materials asap: Todd, Alexa, Scott, and Jill – to be developed by late Sept/early Oct 2010.
2. We will organize a meeting in DC (during week of Oct 18<sup>th</sup> when the FGDC will meet) to: review the materials, complete a test webinar, and present the materials to the FGDC.
3. Webinar to be held November/December 2010, esp. for associate editors.
4. Tom Phillippi (USGS) could be a good resource re: webinars (Bob knows him).

### B. Workshops for 2011 (already in current USFS agreement)

1. Midcareer Managers Workshop
  - a. To be held approx. Feb/March 2011.
  - b. Important people to bring in/consult: Carol Spurrier, Dave Cleland, Tom from NRCS, other people involved in the FGDC Subcommittee.
  - c. We need agency staff to compile a list of potential attendees.
  - d. It would be good to show a number of presentations on results and outcomes – examples of using the NVC to identify critical habitat.
2. Field Personnel
  - a. Timing TBD – need time to process results from midcareer workshop.
  - b. Need to find out who understands what, then translate needs into more specific training program.
  - c. Potential to demonstrate working through a key, do field sampling and vegetation type analysis.

### C. Action Points

1. (Webinar) **Alexa** will work with Todd to develop/consolidate some introductory materials, then send to the Panel for review.
2. (Midcareer WS) **Ralph** and **Dave T** will talk to people who participated in the pilot study (BLM, NRCS, FS) about ideas and participation.

## VII. Peer Review Progress

### A. Pilot Peer Review Suggestions (out of 14 groups, 2 recommended for revision)

1. It may be better to have one document online for peer reviewers to edit – this would make it easier to review and make changes.
2. It may be better for reviewers to look at a macrogroup, so they get a sense of the nuances between the groups it contains.
3. Recruiting experts may be necessary – otherwise it would be too much work for the reviewers.
4. Training needs to be described clearly – reviewers should make their best judgments, make comments, and identify problems.
5. A spreadsheet to pop up in the hierarchy would help – need a quick way to look at groups/macrogroups.

6. It may help to have citations in the descriptions, so reviewers know what informed the description and would have a way to review the sources.
7. Need to review the term “rejection,” since this is not really an option – we have to figure out what to do with the component parts – may become a placeholder instead.

#### B. Decisions and Moving Forward

1. Maybe have a separate conference call for group/macrogroup discussions for the pilot – groups need to be discussed relative to each other.
2. 330 group descriptions will be available by the end of December, there are 120-140 macrogroups that each contain 2-3 groups on average.
3. Agreed to try to review the first batch of groups before the second batch is done.
4. Need for funding for the rewriting/revision after group reviews

#### C. Assigning Associate Editors

1. Need 15 associate editors, each will handle 20 reviewers, correspond with reviewers, coordinate reviews when they are returned, and interact with the data management team. Getting a pile of macrogroups would be the most satisfying way of being an associate editor.
2. Chief editor – Alexa can lead the review from a management perspective only – it may be necessary to have a Chief Editor responsible for the intellectual leadership/content. We discussed the possibility of fundraising so this person can receive honoraria.
3. We discussed the possibility of looking into honoraria for associate editors – there were some questions of whether this would affect the Panel’s role as an independent scientific body.

#### D. **Action Points**

1. **Everyone** – if you have specific ideas of software tools out there to help facilitate the review process, send them to Alexa.
2. **Everyone** – if you have ideas for peer reviewers or editors please submit them to Todd and Don.
3. **Todd and Don** will be in touch with the list of potential associate editors: Chris, Todd, Dave, Este, Ori, Ralph, Jimmy Kagan, Karen Paterson, Alan Weakley, John Sawyer, Steve Cooper.

### VIII. **Miscellaneous**

- A. **Next Exec Call: Wednesday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1:00pm EST**
- B. **Next Panel Call: Wednesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1:00pm EST**
- C. **Education Subcommittee Call: TBC**
- D. Alexa and Ralph hope to set the schedule for the FGDC face-to-face meeting by the end of August – they will notify the Panel so we can schedule a meeting to discuss webinar materials, the review process, etc.