April USNVC Panel Meeting

Rizzo Conference Center in Chapel Hill, NC

April 16-17, 2014

DAY ONE: April 16

Attendees: Cliff Duke, Kimberly Quach, Scott Franklin, Alexa McKerrow, Don Faber-Langendoen, Ayzik Solomeshch, Chris Lea, Esteban Muldavin, Alan Weakley, Julie Evens, James VanKley, Bob Peet, Kyle Palmquist, Michael Lee, Janet Franklin (attended by phone).

Updates on USNVC Status:

- USGS (Alexa)
  - o Friday (April 18) is end of development sprint for updated hierarchy browser. It will be live after Friday.
  - o USGS has grant money to fund NVC-related projects.
    - ▪ $80k to fund 2 projects for plot harvest to encourage other agencies to use VegBank.
    - ▪ $80k for 2 projects to fund regional analyses/tool development
- NatureServe (Don)
  - o EcoObs – a new tool built by NatureServe to store ecological plot data and a variety of ecological analyses and metrics.
- Budget (Cliff)
  - o The current funding year ends July 20th, but agreement can exist until Jan 1st.
  - o Action item: Cliff will request a no cost extension until the agreement end date.
  - o Action item: Cliff will get back to panel with more details about extension and allocation.
  - o Potential uses for extra funds (roughly $50k)
    - ▪ QA/QC meeting of Peer Review Board meeting in Fall/October in a central location (potentially Colorado)
    - ▪ Small breakout meetings if funds allow

Proposal Review:

- Content Development of the NVC
  - o Review of Materials for Division and Macrogroup Levels
    - ▪ Action item: Don will come up with names (roughly 10) for writers for Review of Division Levels
    - ▪ Proposal should include money for honoraria ($500-$1000) to encourage work
- Proceedings

- o Proposal should have funding for design work on the Proceedings. Designer will work with the ESA webmaster to keep it consistent with ESA's design (WordPress).
  - o Design needs to be easily updateable in case pieces move around.
  - o Alexa has suggestions for a good and efficient designer. Depending on the cost, ESA may need to take bids for the design work regardless.
- Cultural Hierarchy Level Descriptions
  - o Not a high priority, if anything, just the top levels
  - o It is unclear to what extent these would need to be reviewed, and if there would be enough work to do to include it.
- VegBank
  - o VegBank is built on old technology that has issues with uploading large amounts of data and breaks. There is a need to update it.
  - o We would like to make broad connections with VegBank. Regional data sets exist outside of VegBank, and we would like to integrate them into VegBank with the same openness standards.
- Training and Outreach
  - o How many workshops a year? Would like 2-3
  - o Training materials and tutorials should be put online
  - o Increase education for the state and Canadian outreach network
  - o Publications are outreach.
    - Action Item: Panel should identify more publication outlets other than ESA journals to reach more potential users of NVC.

USGS NVC Peer Review Testing Project and Proceedings:

- Scott, Bob, and Kyle gave an overview of the USGS NVC Peer Review Testing Project, issues encountered, and the changes made as a result.
- Should we run another pilot project with less perfect data analyses? It does not seem like 1 pilot project is enough to cover all potential issues.
- Do we want to provide a publication that is an outcome of the Peer Review Testing Project? It would be a short paper on the challenges, difficulties, and potential solutions for peer review process.
  - o Action Item: Kim will set up Doodle Poll for Conference Call with interested parties for this project (Bob, Scott, Don, Kyle, any other volunteers).
  - o It would be useful to compare with European methods.
- Action Item: Scott will send an email asking panel for opinions on numbering for Proceedings and its title.
- What to do with NatureServe appendices in the Proceedings?
  - o Include in Proceedings with text along the lines of "This is a mirror of NatureServe as of (date)"
  - o We will need an agreement with NatureServe and budget for it.

- Should we put prototype up? Or make more prototypes representing various levels of complexity available?
- Action Item: We will create a subcommittee for web design of the Proceedings. Bob, Kristen, Alexa have volunteered. An ESA staff member (Kim or Cliff) will also help coordinate.
- What can be submitted to the Proceedings? Can we cut and paste from work that has already been published? What about future publications? Is it self-plagiarism if same data is used to publish in Proceedings and another journal?
    - Proposers should feel free to submit previous work to Proceedings. They can also submit work published in Proceedings to other journals.
- What are the Proceedings ground rules? The Proceedings will not be an official journal at inception. It will be a documentation of changes to the NVC.
    - The lack of official journal recognition raises issues of status and prestige of it; and how to encourage people to publish to the Proceedings rather than other journals.

Attendees: Alexa McKerrow, Chris Lea, Cliff Duke, Scott Franklin, James VanKley, Julie Evens, Kimberly Quach, Esteban Muldavin, Bob Peet, Don Faber-Langendoen, Todd Keeler-Wolf (attended via phone)

- Alexa gave a demonstration of the new NVC hierarchy browser.
    - Action Item: Alexa will email this to ESA so we can link to it on the NVC website
- The Timeline of Effort was updated by Scott and the panel.
    - Alliance Level Screening – have tools to screen, but need funding for screening to occur
    - Division Review – timeline will be based on who Don recruits
    - Action Item: Scott will send updated timeline to panel members.
- A discussion of crosswalks and keys
    - Issues with multiple definitions of crosswalks and how to apply?
    - Will the NVC create keys/tools and find best practices?
- Don gave a presentation on ruderal and other natural MGs
    - A discussion on issues of ruderal which the pilot projects discussed during the PRB meeting aim to resolve.
    - Action item: Panel/PRB will discuss this issue using the results of the pilot projects in August at the Annual Meeting.

Outreach and Workshops:

- Alexa gave an overview of March 13 Denver workshop.
- We should have more regional outreach. There is a need for subregional editors and other programs
- How do we reach other societies? Panel should start slowly by attending meetings other than ESA to get a feel for the culture and audience.
    - Attendance at other meetings would mean giving a talk, not just having one person wander around.
    - Potential other societies: BLM, Society of American Foresters, NRCS, EPA
    - Goal: Fund outreach at 3 meetings next year. 1 person per meeting will go and give a talk.
    - Action Item: Panel members should reach out to contacts at these organizations, create a list of meetings to go to, and volunteer for meetings that would interest you.
- Workshops
    - What are we doing for workshops next year?
    - We should create a working group for the keys (5 people), and a different working group for crosswalks.
    - How do we encourage other organizations upload to VegBank on a continuous basis rather than a one-time data dump?
    - Should we have in-person content development workshops for Alaska, Hawaii, and the Caribbean or will phone, email, etc. be sufficient to get this done?

- We should create agency specific workshops focused at biologists and their business meetings. We would demonstrate how our work is similar to what they're doing on the ground already.
  - ESA meetings should focus on academic issues.
  - We should have outreach to the leadership of other organizations to explain why NVC will help them be more efficient and save money.
- EcoObs Database demonstration by Don and Kristen Snow
  - Covers a full range of ecological observations, not just ecological plots

VegBank

- Should we prioritize ease of use or flexibility to many different approaches and data sources?
- What data fields do we need?
  - Should we incorporate data fields from other agencies? Maybe as a user defined field.
- Action Item: Michael and Bob will figure out the cost of and what would be involved in a "dream upgrade" vs. how much it costs to just keep it alive as it is now.
- Action Item: Create a generic import tool that people from other organizations can use to upload their data to VegBank. This is potentially for April 2015.
- Talk to Forest Service about cyber infrastructure concept.

Proceedings:

- Proceedings will be hosted on the ESA site.
- Do we want documentation and instructions on how to submit on ESA site or USNVC site?
- Action Item: Kim will organize peer review call about design of the Proceedings, harmonization of ESA Veg site and USNVC site.
- Action Item: Kim will add ESA logo to Veg Web site.

ESA 2015 Annual Meeting (Baltimore):

- Symposia or OOS
  - The talk will be on history of vegetation classification symposia with international focus.
  - If we manage to recruit international involvement, we may also want to run a workshop.
  - A history alone would be a turn off to attendees. Make sure to include a forward thinking approach too.
    - The talk should include the meaning of the history and how it informs the future, rather than a long overview of the history.
  - Deadlines for Symposia: early Sept to recruit speakers. OOS has more generous deadlines.
  - Ayzik and Julie have volunteered to organize.
- Field Trips and Workshops
  - Deadline: December for workshops
  - Potential field trip site: Soldiers Delight

- - - Max travel time should be 2 hours, preferably less.
    - We will run a combination workshop and field trip about classification mapping.
    - Chris has volunteered to organize.
- Booth
    - Suggestions for other, more interactive ways to engage people?
    - Need volunteers for booth for lunch hour and during poster sessions.