

Review of FGDC standards program of work

National Vegetation Classification Standard, FGDC-STD-005

Interview with Ralph Crawford, 2006-04-27

1. What's the problem (issue) that the standard is trying to address?

The problem (issue) can be inferred from the objective and scope: see National Vegetation Classification Standard, <http://www.fgdc.gov/standards/projects/FGDC-standards-projects/vegetation/index.html>.

2. What are the complementary standards (voluntary or accepted) that support this standard?
 - a. If the standard refers to other standards, have the referenced standards changed in a way that requires changes to this standard?
 - b. Since this standard was adopted or last reviewed, have new standards been adopted elsewhere that should be referenced in this standard?

NatureServe (www.natureserve.org), a non-profit conservation organization, has standards with a different slant, but their standards do not conflict with the NVCS.

The Ecological Society of America Vegetation Panel is in the process of publishing "Guidelines for Describing Associations and Alliances of the U.S. National Vegetation Classification" (http://www.esa.org/vegweb/docFiles/NVC_Guidelines-v40.pdf), which describes the process for classifying vegetation based on floristic characteristics.

3. What standard(s) does this FGDC standard support?

There are no standards that the Chair, Vegetation Subcommittee, can identify that are supported by the NVCS.

4. Are the standards in active use?

Yes, the NVCS is used in Brohman, R.; Bryant, L. eds. 2005. Existing Vegetation Classification and Mapping Technical Guide. Gen. Tech. Rep. WO-67. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Ecosystem Management Coordination Staff. 305 p. (See http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/rig/includes/VEG_guide.pdf).

The National Park Service also has been using the standard in its mapping program.

5. Is the standard a 'Government Unique Standard'?

Yes.

- a. If so, has it been examined to see if Voluntary Consensus Standards might now be in place?

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No. no single other standard replaces it.

- i. If a corresponding Voluntary Consensus Standard exists, should the Consensus standard be considered for adoption to replace the existing standard?

Not applicable.

- ii. If a corresponding Voluntary Consensus Standard does not exist, should this standard be moved to a national standard?

Yes, although the Ecological Society of America (ESA) might have some contention about advancing the NVCS to a national standard.

- b. Is it appropriate to remain in FGDC? Why or why not?

Yes, as it is intended to be mandatory for Federal standards.

6. Who are the important stakeholders that need input into the review of this standard?

- a. Which Federal agencies in addition to the agency with maintenance authority should the review committee include?

All Federal agencies that should be involved are members of the Vegetation Subcommittee.

- b. Which non-Federal agencies should the review committee include?

The review committee should include international participants and non-governmental organizations including NatureServe and ESA.

7. Are there editorial errors that you are aware of since this FGDC standard was endorsed?

Yes.

8. Are there technical errors or technical changes that you are aware since this FGDC standard was endorsed?

Yes, some technical changes need to be made, but Vegetation Subcommittee is seeking guidance on what constitutes a major or minor change, which in turn identifies the process the standard should go through.

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Based on your answers to the above, the sponsor team recommends the following:

The standard to be revised.

Justification:

The hierarchical revision working group, which includes international members in addition to Vegetation SC members, plan to revise NVCS, which covers physiognomic levels.

The Vegetation SC is developing national standards for the floristic levels of vegetation classification, with the plan to advance the standard to public review this year. The NVCS and national standards for the floristic levels of vegetation classification are intertwined and complementary. The ESA Vegetation Panel developed classification guidelines for floristic levels, as a template to develop floristic levels of vegetation classification. Some Feds believed that ESA requirements did not meet business needs.