

1. Program/Activity Name: Vegetation Subcommittee

2. What are the programs this data supports?

The Vegetation Subcommittee supports vegetation classification, inventory, monitoring, and mapping programs. These programs are managed by 17 FGDC cabinet agencies and many other agencies, organizations, academia, and professional societies.

Very Briefly Describe All Applicable Items:

3. Uses of Data: What are the end uses of this data? How does it benefit customers, support lead and other agency missions, etc.?

End users of vegetation data have an interest in evaluating and managing our nation's natural resources. They can include public and private land managers, interpreters and site planners, researchers, natural resource industries, educators and students, land use policy makers, environmental and conservation organizations, and outdoor enthusiasts. Even though the participant Subcommittee agencies have different missions they ALL need consistent, reliable data on vegetation resources.

Customers need consistent, reliable data describing vegetation resources to provide the foundation for an effective assessment, inventory, and management of the nation's ecosystems. Field managers need to understand and use appropriate field techniques to map vegetation, by itself and in its relation to soils and other non-vegetative factors to assess habitats.

Vegetation data supports agency missions by providing essential information on commodity resources (e.g., timber and forage), wildlife and fisheries habitat, carbon sequestration, ecosystem function and health, societal values (e.g., urban cooling, clean air and water, and scenery).

4. Charter/Plan: Do you have a current charter or plan for collection? Should it be updated?

The Vegetation Subcommittee has had a charter since its inception. The Subcommittee is in the process of completing its review an updated charter and will finalize it in the first quarter of FY2003.

5. Metadata: What is the status of metadata? Is it discoverable and served through the NSDI Clearinghouse? What percentage of this theme's data has metadata and is in a Clearinghouse node?

Approximately 50% of Forest Service units have vegetation data, and approximately 20% of Forest Service units have metadata that are discoverable and served through NSDI clearinghouses.

Vegetation data (maps, plots, descriptions, species lists, etc) resulting from the USGS National Park Vegetation Mapping Program has high quality FGDC compliant metadata that is served in the NBII Clearinghouse.

The GAP Analysis Program data likewise has FGDC compliant metadata in the NBII Clearinghouse.

6. Standards: What is the status of this theme's data, process, transfer, and classification standards?

See response to #7. The information needed to respond to this question is presently unavailable. However, the subcommittee is in the process of surveying federal agencies. It will then prepare a report on the implementation of standards by agency. This item is a high priority for the subcommittee because an impending revision to the existing standard. .

7. Progress: List FY 2002/2003 activities/progress to date (quantify where possible)

Here is a list of the subcommittee's activities for FY 2002/2003:

Revision of physiognomic level (possible proposal to Vegetation Subcommittee)

Survey and prepare a status report (by Agency) on the implementation of standards (operational use of the standards)

Revisit relationship between FGDC and ESA Vegetation Panel and the relationship between FGDC and other subcommittees and work groups

Evaluation of plots database and comparison with other federal plots databases.

Complete standards for floristics and review ESA Panel report

Testing/Validation of floristic standard

Evaluate MOU revise as needed and finalize updated Charter

Engage in Rangeland -Forest definition discussions

Develop a long-term strategy and action plan in concert with others

8. Leadership: Describe your active leadership role with others (private, local, State, Federal) who collect and use this data.

Members of the FGDC Vegetation Subcommittee have been actively working with a special committee of the Ecological Society of America, the National Vegetation Classification Panel, which has been analyzing the FGDC approved National Vegetation Classification standard as an activity under the MOU between FGDC, ESA, NatureServe, and USGS (NBII). This ESA Panel is preparing a document that makes recommendations on how to improve and expand the current standard pursuant to future direction within the existing standard.

9. Collaborative Partnerships: How many major partnerships with others do you have on this theme? (list if desired)

Through the Panel on Vegetation Classification of the Ecological Society of America, the FGDC Vegetation Subcommittee has established a working partnership with the community of academic and professional vegetation scientists.

10. Scope: Are you engaged in broad participation and international/global coordination?

The subcommittee is engaged in broad participation and international/global coordination. A few examples include the Association for Biodiversity Information, and the Ecological Society of America.

11. Policy: Do you have a policy in place for full and open access or data sharing?

Yes. The Subcommittee has been open with its work and meetings to encourage a high level of information and data sharing.

12. Are there areas or issues regarding lead responsibilities for spatial data themes that require attention, or lessons-learned that you would like to share with others? Please describe.

Coordination will be essential with other FGDC entities, e.g., Wetlands, Earth Cover, and Forest Sustainability Data. What mechanism exists to ensure compatibility among standards promulgated by these entities relative to vegetation?