**Veg Panel Meeting Notes**

**ESA Annual Meeting; Portland, OR**

**Tuesday, August 8th, 2017**

Attendees: Scott Franklin, Todd Keeler-Wolf, Julie Evens, Michael Jennings, James Moore, Pat Comer, Dave Roberts, Cliff Duke, Jill Parsons, Milo Pyne, Alexa McKerrow, Tom Wentworth, Esteban Muldavin, Jack Triepke, Dave Tart, Ayzik Solomesch,

Remote attendees: Chris Lea, Don Faber-Langendoen, Marianne Burke, Bob Peet

**Status Reports:**

Education and Outreach:

* Field Trip: 20 participants represented a variety of countries (China, Belgium, Germany, New Zealand) plus various states across the US. They visited Disappearing Lake, a fen and evanescent lake. The trip was investigative, informative, and fun!
* Poster Session: We had lots of consistent interest at the poster session – it was very successful. **Alexa will send Jill digital versions of all the posters to put on the Veg Panel website.**

Committee reports:

* Infrastructure:
  + We previously conducted an assessment to see what we need to make the NVC infrastructure sustainable; USFS R&D is not able to put up any more money at this time; other deputy areas say the same and are trying to figure out how to manage with looming budget cuts; Current priorities with the funding we have available include:
* Setting up a peer review tool
* Addressing the current security risks for VegBank ($15K, one month of developer time is needed). If we don’t address this soon VegBank could disappear.
* Getting usnvc.org to work faster for the public
* Publications:
  + Alexa has received lists of publications and will compile them into a database.
  + Ideally all entries in the publications database will include a DOI and a permanent link (pending copyright).
* Plant Nomenclature:
  + We have been meeting by conference call to discuss nomenclature and USDA Plants.
  + The updating process is very unpredictable, so it’s useful that we are communicating with USDA staff about this now.

Budget:

Jill gave an update on the remaining funds from year 2 and available funds for the current budget year.

**Peer Review Process/Tools/Keys**

Peer Review Board Status: Don gave an overview of the current Board:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Region** | **Regional Editor** |
| WEST | Warm Deserts | Este Muldavin |
|  | Californian | Todd Keeler-Wolf |
|  | Great Basin | Marion Reid |
|  | Vancouverian | Del Meidinger |
|  | Rocky Mountain | Jack Triepke |
| GREAT PLAINS | Great Plains | Bruce Hoagland |
| EAST | Laurentian-Acadian | Don Faber-Langendoen |
|  | Central Interior-Midwest | TBD |
|  | Appalachian-Northeast | Lesley Sneddon |
|  | Southeast Coastal Plain | Alan Weakley |
| CARIBBEAN | Caribbean | Humfredo (Fito) Marcano |
| BOREAL (east-central) | Boreal-Subarctic | TBD (US)/Ken Baldwin (CA) |
| ALASKA | AK & Coastal-Boreal-Arctic  Eastern Arctic / Alpine | Scott Geyer (US) / TBD (CA)  Andy Cutko (US) / TBD (CA) |
| POLYNESIA | Hawaii | TBD |

Peer Review Tool:

* After comparing several tools, and narrowing it down to two (Scholastica vs. Peer Track), Don, Kristin, and Alexa recommend moving forward with Peer Track because:
  + It appears to have all the functionality we need (e.g. building a reviewer list over time, sending confidential comments to the author, downloading documents to use track changes and then re-uploading, modifying submission classifications, sufficient capacity to assign roles, etc.).
* Peer Track was the more expensive option, but still falls within our current budget.
  + There is a $1,500 set-up cost (this may vary, depending on how complex it is).
  + Then, every submission incurs a $30 fee. We discussed being strategic with submissions to minimize fees (e.g. someone can propose multiple changes in one submission, and sections of one submission could be assigned to different reviewers as needed).
  + We agreed that in the first year we would not charge submission fees to authors, but rather cover the expenses through our grant funding.
* Next steps:
  + **Everyone should review the Peer Track demo and send any questions or concerns to Don by early September.**
  + **Cliff and Jill will ask Steve Sayre about the possibility of using ScholarOne through Wiley.** We want to look into the feasibility and cost of this option before making a final decision.
  + **Everyone should send Don feedback on the draft author instructions and guidance by early September.**
  + The author instructions need to be available on the Proceedings website. We should keep Gordon involved in this discussion and possibly ask him to attend a future Panel call as our plans solidify.
  + We need to identify criteria to accept and reject proposals into the system (potentially allow for people to recommend proposals for submission).

New Section of the NVC Proceedings:

* The new section will be called: Methods, Data, and Best Practices.
* Papers will cover topics related to the practice of ecological vegetation classification for the USNVC (such as sampling methods, data gaps, or best practices when analyzing data), but are not directly concerned with editing or revising specific vegetation type concepts.
* Dave Roberts is the editor for this new section. Bob recently submitted a paper, though it hasn’t gone out for review yet.
* We intend to handle the Methods, Data, and Best Practices section like a small journal, separate and autonomous from the rest of the NVC Proceedings. Reviews will be done on an ad hoc basis.

Engaging Associate Editors (AEs):

* Soon, once a peer review tool is in place, Don will ask REs to begin engaging AEs:
  + RE’s will submit names and biosketches of potential AEs to Don.
  + Don will submit the biosketches to Exec for approval. We just need basic resume information to ensure we have people who are experts in their area.
* **Don will outline the process of reaching out and approving AEs and send it to Exec for their review.**

NVC Review Template:

Don reviewed several questions about the template with the Panel and recorded the changes. **Don will send the revised review template to the Panel for final review.**

Some key decisions made include:

* Making the type concept sentence required.
* Removing the cover scale used attribute on the floristics table (still keeping representative cover) and request that information be available in the methods section instead. Other changes made to the floristics table included dropping the “general growth form” and “prevailing height range” fields.
* The physiognomy and structure table is now optional.
* The “discussion” section was renamed and kept as optional.
* The “concept history” section now has a table similar to “related concepts.”

**Budget priorities:**

Vegbank:

* VegBank is currently running on software that’s over 15 years old; the data and data model are fine, but we need to rebuild the infrastructure.
* We could move the server from NCEAS to the cloud where it wouldn’t be endangering other projects. Doing this would ease some of the pressure.
* We decided to allocate $15K for developer time this fall to determine the extent and nature of the problem with the struts software and identify a way to keep VegBank running. **Jill will reach out to NCEAS about getting this VegBank work on their fall schedule.**
* Other funding possibilities we should explore include:
  + Exploring NSF’s program that allows for updates for infrastructure and data systems. We can’t meet this year’s September deadline but we could begin planning to submit a proposal for next year. **Bob will ask Matt Jones to join him in reaching out to the NSF program officer for this program.**
  + **Pat will explore NatureServe’s connections with ESRI and Microsoft to enquire about in-kind support for VegBank and NVC infrastructure.**
  + **Cliff can help explore possibilities through ESA’s connections.**
  + **Marianne will ask the USFS government partnership office to see if they can help.**

Establishing priorities for remaining Year 2 funds:

We have approximately $27K remaining in last year’s funding, most of which is due to saving money on the spring 2017 Panel meeting. We decided to devote these funds to the following activities:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Budget Priorities** |  |
| Developer time to fix vegbank: | $15,000.00 |
| Peer Review Tool | $2,500.00 |
| Western RE Meeting | $10,000.00 |
|  |  |
| Total: | $27,500.00 |

**Completing Content for the NVC:**

* We have a plan in place for the following regions:
  + Alaska: the workshop planned for this November (7-9) will help move this forward and also help make a plan for continuing work on the CNVC.
  + Caribbean: we have a new regional editor on board; Don will reach out to him after the peer review tool is in place.
  + Hawaii: we still need to identify an RE. **Todd will reach out to Jim Jacobi and Art Whistler about helping with Hawaii and American Samoa.**
* We created the following strategy to help fill in gaps in the NVC as a whole:
  + Pat will work with Kristin to get a list of gaps sent out to REs.
  + Don will then then have a conference call with the REs and Alexa to begin formulating a strategy to add content.
  + We will plan a Western Regional Editor Meeting next spring or summer to help fill in the gaps. This could potentially be held in conjunction with the western NatureServe meeting. Pat will keep everyone informed of the dates for the NatureServe meeting.
  + The Panel may also discuss this at the spring 2018 face-to-face meeting.

**Education and Outreach Planning:**

Natural Areas Conference (Fort Collins):

Carol Spurrier is organizing a symposia and poster with a number of people, including Pat, Scott, Don, and Todd).

IAVS 2018 Meeting in Montana

* About the meeting:
  + - The theme is Intact Native Vegetation; a subtheme is Vegetation Science in Natural Resource management.
    - Some excursions are being planned for Yellowstone and Glacier National park.
    - They are currently looking for abstract reviewers.
    - Proposals for oral sessions and excursions are due in the fall.
* Ideas for an Oral Session
  + Generally, we could develop a session that would have speakers from all over the world speaking on a similar issue. We want to be careful that talks don’t re-tread over each other.
  + We could develop an oral session on how different vegetation classification systems deal with change over time, or how different systems address ruderal vegetation.
  + Other ideas we discussed included:
    - Connecting intact native vegetation with other things on the landscape.
    - Vegetation modeling.
    - Paired sessions that would discuss how we’ve been degrading ecosystems and where we are now in the morning, and then in the afternoon introduce how to look at the future moving forward.
* Ideas for a one-day Excursion (possibly mid-week)
  + - Most excursions are 10-hour days, and ideally less than half of that is spent driving.
    - Visit Big Sky and ride a tram up to the Alpine.
* Other ideas
  + We may consider having a short Panel business meeting at IAVS next year.
  + We could take some materials with us on the NVC to leave out for meeting participants.

ESA 2018 Meeting in New Orleans

Most Panel members will prioritize attending IAVS instead of ESA in 2018. We likely will not have a Panel Business Meeting or a booth at the ESA meeting.

**Change in Leadership for the FGDC Vegetation Subcommittee**

* At the end of the fiscal year Marianne will no longer be Chair of the FGDC Veg Subcommittee.
* Dave Tart will reach out to his contacts to see if they’ve picked the next Chair.
* **Don will submit names to the subcommittee for potential NVC State Partners (who would also become subcommittee members) soon.**
* **Scott and Alexa will put together a document to help brief the new Subcommittee Chair.**

**Potential Agenda Items for the next Panel Call:**

* The list of associations without descriptions.
* Dave Tart’s process for crosswalking.