

ESA Vegetation Panel Meeting Notes

Portland, OR; Tuesday, August 7, 2012

Attendees: Scott Franklin, Cliff Duke, Alexa McKerrow, Michael Jennings, Esteban Muldavin, Hazel Gordon, Orié Loucks, Kurt Hartman, James Moore, Jill Parsons (Don Faber-Langendoen attended via conference call)

Status Reports:

Workshop: (Alexa)

- 16 people attended.
- Participation was mostly younger women and academics.
- In the future, it would have been useful to have participants bring in case studies and talk through what they're working on.
- A participant from NEON spoke about their use of sample allocation.

Mt Hood Field trip (Este)

- 20 people (plus organizers/guides) attended.
- There was a lot of participation and attendees asked many questions.
- The location was a draw – we should consider that when planning field trips in the future.
- **We should get in touch with the participants afterwards to see if they are interested in becoming more involved in the NVC and ask them to share any educational materials they are developing. (Todd could possibly take this item forward?)**

Symposium (Orié)

- The symposium was very full and Orié received many compliments on how the session went.
- Scott took some notes; all the speakers did a really good job.
- Springer asked if we'd be interested in making the presentations into a small book; **Orié will get in touch with the speakers about this and think about how to move forward.**
- We don't have to only think about what Springer is interested in, in terms of publishing something; a longer edited volume could be useful too.

Booth (Jill and Michael)

- The booth had a very central location in the exhibit hall this year and the new banners looked great.
- Energized people were coming by in a slow, steady stream early in the week.
- **It may be useful to try to have our booth placed next to the Vegetation Section booth in the future; Jill will look into this possibility.**

Budget and funding (Jill)

- *Update: since the meeting in Portland ESA has received the Year 3 funding.*
- There will be some funds remaining from Year 2; **after Year 2 is over Jill will analyze how much remains and update the Panel.**

Publications (Orié)

- **Alexa will continue working on a list of Panel and NVC related publications organized by category and date, and will possibly put it in a similar format to the NVC factsheet.**
- Other possible publication categories to add are: NVC tools, Applications of the NVC, Crosswalking to other international classification systems.
- **Alexa and Jill can work on getting PowerPoint slides from relevant presentations at ESA meetings posted online.**

Annual Report (Scott)

- Scott gave an overview of the Panel's main accomplishments over the past year, and the Panel members present thanked Scott for his continuing contribution as Chair.

Old Business:

Peer Review Progress: Upper Levels(Don)

- The upper level work is essentially done.
- In order to have administrative oversight and approval of the upper level products, Don has drafted a report on the work that was completed for L1-L3 and hopes the FGDC Subcommittee will discuss how they sign off on it on their August call.
- **Don and Scott will draft a letter for the Panel to approve that thanks international colleagues for their reviews and responds to their questions. They'll also involve Aysik in this process.**

Peer Review Progress: Groups (Don)

- There are around 80 Groups outstanding out of 330; 30-40 of which don't have editors (those will go in as proposed Groups).
- Don is following up with the AEs of all outstanding groups and encouraging them to complete the work as soon as possible.
- In terms of revising the descriptions, Don tested the process with Jack Triepke to develop a systematic way for the editors to work with the original authors.
- NatureServe has a request in to fund the Group revisions, but don't know the outcome of the request yet.

USGS RFQ to ESA on Peer Review Process Testing(Jill)

- Jill gave an overview of the RFQ and the response ESA sent to USGS.
- If successful, this work would be a good chance to work through a potential long-term peer review process for the NVC, and help us discover what kind of support and funding the process will require.
- ESA hasn't received a response from USGS yet, but **Jill and Cliff will keep the Panel informed as soon as we know more.**

CAPS Grant (Alexa)

- The California Native Plant Society worked with NatureServe to develop a successful proposal (\$25K with part matching from the state level) to look at getting CA data into the NVC and also working on a prototype to redefine Alliances in relation to Groups and Associations.
- The group, which includes Todd Keeler-Wolf, Marion Reid, and Julie Evans, wants to engage the Panel with outreach activities.
- The Panel discussed the importance of providing guidance to the CA group on the Alliance concept.

USGS RFQ to NatureServe on Alliance Concepts (Don)

- This work, if the proposal is successful, would be a review of Alliances (not a full blown review as we did for Groups, but more than a simple screening as done for the Associations).
- Reviewers would build out concept sentences for Alliances while looking at their relationship with Groups and Associations.
- We need to take a careful look at the Alliance concept while going through this effort. The Group concepts will be helpful in this.
- Este suggested that we have a concept paper that summarizes what an Alliance is so that the criteria are clear and everyone is on the same page.
- **Don will send around the older paper on Alliance concepts so the Panel can review it and possibly make changes.**
- We need an active PRB to take this forward – AEs (if they are willing to stay on the board) would work from the MG level down; there may be several AEs within the same MG.
- We may want to recruit additional PRB members to help with the workload.
- Regarding the review form, the Panel discussed the following changes:
 - o Including valid (high, medium, or low) and invalid to help reviewers make decisions more quickly
 - o Including a sample form with the instructions to help reviewers
 - o Possibly ask reviewers to list their concerns on distinctness of concept and how the alliance fits with other alliances and then groups.

- This will be a quick review to ensure we're heading in the right direction with Alliances using concept sentences; the Panel won't see a full concept fleshed out for this.
- The Panel will need to agree on the process for this work (if the proposal is accepted) and the PRB will carry out the work.
- Timeframe: potentially starting in September or October

Interim Review Process (Scott)

- Deciding how to determine concept changes vs. non-concept changes was sometimes challenging, but some outcomes are included below:
 - o Changes in diagnostic species should constitute a concept change.
 - o Synonymy/grammatical changes are not concept changes.
 - o Re: changes in distribution – it counts as a concept change if it affects other parts of the hierarchy and/or adjacent types.
 - o AEs may need to consult other AEs depending on the scope of proposed changes.
- We plan to move forward with regional AEs within the PRB. These will be defined by clusters of Divisions (rather than geographically).
- Don will sketch out 6-7 regions (made up of these Division clusters) and begin soliciting AEs to take them on.
- Proposals at different levels may not always go through the same process (i.e. there could be a different process for the upper levels).
 - o For L1-L3 changes the EIC, Panel, regional AEs, plus 5 international experts would take on that review process.
 - o This group would look at changes every 5 years, and make changes every 5-10 years depending on how many issues arise in each 5-year period.
- Users can propose multi-level changes in a single proposal.
- Developing a flow chart to demonstrate how the review process works may be useful.
- The Panel and PRB will work closely with ESA and the FGDC Subcommittee when developing the proceedings. Fleshing out a draft of what the proceedings may look like before our next meeting would be useful. **This may be a task for the Exec committee to take forward.**
- **Scott will make changes to the interim review process document and send it to the Panel.**

Screening MGs and Divisions (Scott)

- Though we're more focused on other levels, we need to propose processes for screening MGs and Divisions.
- Once the Group review is complete, we can create a simple MG concept sentence; there's currently no support to flesh out the MGs more fully
- The FGDC Subcommittee asked the HRWG to take on a process for the Division level. There are currently geographic distributions and concept sentences for Divisions, but no full descriptions.
- The HRWG could pull together the concept sentences that currently exist and send those to the Panel. With minimal funding we may be able to split up the work and have everyone write very short descriptions for Divisions – this would bet the whole hierarchy in place.

Planning for a Joint Panel & PRB Meeting (Scott)

- Early January before classes start again could be ideal (Jan 2-4 or the following week).
- **Jill will work on a budget comparison between Raleigh and Chapel Hill, NC to help us pick a location.**
- **Scott will work on developing a meeting agenda. Everyone should send Scott potential agenda items.** Possible agenda items include:
 - o Efforts at the Alliance level
 - o Groups, MGs, Divisions – general peer review progress
 - o Developing/Reviewing outreach materials
 - o Division and MG descriptions
 - o Peer review process testing (if proposal is funded)
 - o Proceedings & the interim review process
 - o Other proposals

Outreach Materials (Jill)

- We should go ahead and get something online regarding agency-specific applications to the NVC.
- **Alexa will start putting material for the factsheets together with the education subcommittee, work on a visual identity for them, and send them to Panel members for review.**
- One potential proposal for the future could be to develop online course materials/an online lab on metaanalysis, bioinformatics, and VegBank – Bob or Mike Lee may be able to help with this)
 - o This could include chapters on how you get the data down, as well as data analysis, how to use heterogenous data for analysis, downloading plots, conditioning them for use; we could identify a dataset (ensuring it's in VegBank and has a clear story to tell in the analysis)
 - o We could ask Dave Roberts about his analysis tools
 - o **This is a potential topic for an ESA long range planning grant – Scott will look into this.**
- The tutorial for adding data to VegBank may need some work to make it more accessible; **Alexa, Jill, and Este will try to work through the VegBranch tutorial to see if there are ways to improve it, possibly having a conference call to discuss potential changes.**

Proposals and Publications (Scott)

- Cliff introduced ESA's conflict of interest policy and forms, and those at the meeting were asked to sign and return them. **Jill will coordinate with Panel members who were not present to get their forms.**
- We discussed setting up an ad-hoc committee to review materials for proposals where some Panel members may get paid to do work on behalf of the Panel. Setting this up will help solidify ESA's ethics for auditing purposes and provide an independent review (of course those reviewing could not be involved in the proposals).
- **Scott will act as the point person for putting this committee together as needed for the future.**
- **Cliff and Jill will renew the conversation with NSF about potentially funding the Vegetation Change workshop at the end of this fiscal year.**
- We prioritized several activities to take forward with any remaining funds leftover from Year 2:
 - o Keys – if we can get a key down to the Division level multiple keys could blossom. Keys are a good way to summarize the criteria involved and show the NVC's usability.
 - o Possible additional support for the EIC and/or regional AEs.

Planning for the 2013 ESA Meeting (Scott)

- Workshop ideas: possibly running a workshop on VegBank
- Field Trip ideas: the Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve should have lots of plots, including long-term monitoring plots, and there may be some data we could work with in the context of VegBank. This area also has many gradients – it could be a draw to get more people signed up.
- OOS or SYMP ideas:
 - o A session on the uses of vegetation classification (or veg monitoring/mapping more generally); incorporating remote sensing and imaging could draw people in.
 - o Maybe we should start thinking about 2014 now while we have plenty of time to plan, rather than trying to get a proposal in for 2013.
- **Jill will put these ideas on the agenda for discussion on a future Panel call.**

Other Business:

- **We need to brainstorm some ideas for future new members.**