Introduction to the USNVC, VegBank and the Proceedings

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Background

Vegetation classification is important for biological conservation and resource management and for basic scientific research. These activities require that ecological units be defined and that their distributions on the landscape be known and understood. A standardized method of classifying vegetation is needed to solve management and ecological problems that vary in scale and cross jurisdictional boundaries.

The Partnership

U.S. Forest Service (Subcommittee Chair), USGS Core Science Systems, NatureServe, Ecological Society of America (ESA), and the Vegetation Subcommittee of the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC).

USNVC

In 2016 the US National Vegetation Classification Version 2.0 was rolled out by the FGDC Vegetation Subcommittee and its partners. This represents the formal release of the national classification based on the 2008 FGDC dynamic content standard.

The Classification

For natural vegetation the classification hierarchy is defined using eight levels, Formation class through association. Each of these levels are defined by physiognomy, growth form and ecological drivers.

VegBank

VegBank is the vegetation plot database of ESA’s Panel on Vegetation Classification. VegBank consists of three linked databases that contain (1) the actual plot records, (2) vegetation types recognized in the USNVC and other vegetation types submitted by users, and (3) all plant taxa recognized by Integrated Taxonomic Information System/USDA Plants as well as all other plant taxa recorded in plot records. www.vegbank.org

Key features of Vegbank

- Permanent Archive
- Open Access
- User-friendly
- Comprehensive
- Concept-Based Taxonomy
- Ability to embargo sensitive data
- Unique Accession Codes for citing data

VEGBANK

The National Vegetation Classification (NVC) is a central organizing framework for documentation, inventory, monitoring, and study of vegetation in the United States. Because the NVC is a dynamic classification, changes can be made to the classification in a formal peer review process. The Proceedings of the USNVC serve as an official record of any changes, and the reasoning and evidence behind those changes.

Get Involved

- Encourage your agency to participate in the FGDC – Vegetation Subcommittee
- Attend an USNVC workshop or field trip
- Join in on the ESA Panel on Vegetation Classification annual meeting
- Propose new types to the USNVC
- Become a reviewer
- Contribute Plot data to VegBank
- Get involved with state partners

U.S. National Vegetation Classification: Advancing the Description and Management of the Nation’s Ecosystems