Existing Vegetation Classification, Mapping and Inventory Technical Guide Revision

Phase 1 - Scope and Working Groups

The scope of Phase 1 revisions is defined in the charter and includes a focus on revisions needed to conform to new FGDC standards. Review of the Technical Guide to remove policy statements redundant to FSM 1940 or are appropriate for the FSM is a second emphasis area. This effort will also include reformatting the Technical Guide to be consistent with draft FSH 1909.14, Section 20 and removal of content not relevant to the procedures and implementation of the Technical Guide is the final focus area.

Summary:

Phase 1 Revision Scope was defined at the core team meeting to include four primary revision tasks. Working Groups were identified to develop these revisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revision Task Scope</th>
<th>Working Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Review and Text/Table Revisions</td>
<td>Ralph Warbington, Kellen Nelson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 1 - Introduction edits and suggested revisions</td>
<td>Andy Lister (by 7/15/10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Guide Edits – Existing Vegetation Classification</td>
<td>David Tart, Ralph Warbington</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life form/Cover Revision for Mapping</td>
<td>Kevin Megown, Mark Riley, Carlos Ramirez, Andy Lister, David Tart Draft completed and under review by core team as of 7/14/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Guide Edits – Existing Vegetation Mapping</td>
<td>Dave Tart, Wendy Goetz, Ralph Warbington</td>
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Existing Vegetation Classification:

- Changes to the FGDC Vegetation Classification Standard, dropping Physiognomic Division, Order, Class and Subclass in the higher levels, Revising Formation levels and adding Division, Macrogroupe and Group to the middle levels to allow for more utility above the Alliance and Association bottom floristic levels. The new standard now has 8 levels.
- Currently NVC Top 4 Levels (Formation Class, Formation Subclass, Formation, and Division) are relatively stable. NVC Groups and Macrogroups are being drafted and peer-reviewed. Final descriptions for levels down to the Group are probably 2-3 years away from being completed. (Note: Don Faber-Langendoen thinks that the hierarchy will be stable down to the group level by Dec. 2011.)
• NRIS tables should be updated to add the new NVC classification after the types are relatively stable (after Dec. 2011). Most regions either have or are developing Dominance Type Classifications that will need to be cross-walked to NVC at least to the Group level.
• Need to check definitions in the FGDC Standard with Tech Guide definitions: for example trees and shrubs.
• Guide should address other classification systems and when it may still be legitimate to use them.
• Need a letter to ESA and Vegetation Panel for emphasis on providing keys for the top 6 levels down to the Group level and timeline to enable use in the technical guide revision and facilitate the development of classification crosswalks.
• The current version of Existing Vegetation Classification and Mapping Technical Guide for classification data collection requirements, guidance, and collection protocol are all consistent with the new version of the FGDC Standard and the new NVC hierarchy, so little or no changes are needed to this section of the Guide.

This discussion identified the need to revise the following sections related to Classification:

1.1.2 - Vegetation Classification Standards - section needs to be re-written, introduce new classification levels, and reference the new FGCD – NVC document.

1.3.1 - Vegetation Classification Concepts and Definitions – section needs to be reviewed minor changes made for consistency with new NVC hierarchy.

1.5.1 - Relationship to the FGDC National Vegetation Classification Standard – section will need to be updated to reflect the revised standards and updates in the guide.

2.2.4 – Association Criteria – section will need to be checked for consistency with the new standards.

2.2.5 – Alliance Criteria - section will need to be checked for consistency with the new standards.

2.4.9 - FGDC Physiognomic Crosswalk Attributes - section will need complete revision since physiognomic levels of the NVC classification were dropped in the revised standards.

Appendix 2a - Proposed moving field forms into main body of section 2.

2.7.3 - Vegetation Type Metadata - review for consistency with new NVC

Consider what to do with Appendix 1A, 1B, and 1C in light of new standards, and if we need for mapping. (Working Group for Lifeform / Physiognomic Order for mapping attribute should identify what to keep.)
Existing Vegetation Mapping:

Consistency with NVC revised standards:

- Drop Division, Class, and Subclass map attributes from the guide and the GIS data dictionary. These were identified as required by the previous NVC standard but are generally derived after mapping has been completed using crosswalks from vegetation type(s).

- There is however, a continued need for a lifeform / cover map attribute, equivalent to Physiognomic Order. Team agreed this needed to be resolved soon to make needed changes to the Guide for consistency with the new NVC standard. A working group of core team members agreed to handle this need.

Lifeform / Cover Revisions Working Group

Scope: Modify Physiognomic Order and/or develop a classification for a mapping attribute of lifeform / cover. Contact vegetation mapping program managers; find out what classification each Region is currently using. Provided a classification with definitions and identify what are core and core optional attributes to minimize the potential need for regional add-ons. Develop classification Key(s) as needed. The Key needs to address cover by lifeform rules, as well as non-vegetated conditions. Review Appendix 1A, 1B, and 1C and make recommendation on deletions and or modifications. Provide a Draft product for review by July 1 with core team conference call soon after.

Working Group Members: Mark Riley, Carlos Ramirez, Kevin Megown, Andy Lister, and Dave Tart. Kevin Megown will be the working group leader.

Mapping Floristic Types:

- Currently SAF and SRM cover types are the only requirement for mid level maps. Make SAF and SRM cover types core optional, as these are common classification systems in use. Changing these to core optional will have the least impact on legacy map products and the GIS data dictionary.

- Add the new NVC Group level to mid-level map attributes as the most detailed floristic level required for mid level maps. This will allow sharing of map products across Region boundaries and facilitate incorporation into bioregional and national level mapping products.

- No change for base-level mapping for floristic classification requirements. Keep Alliance as the floristic level requirement for base level mapping.

- Integrate mid-level changes into base-level mapping standards.
The following is a list of Sections and Tables that will need to be significantly modified to be consistent with the new NVC standard, primarily due to the deletions of Physiognomic Division, Order, Class and Subclass. These sections and Tables will also have to be modified to be consistent with the revised Lifeform/Order mapping attribute being developed by the working group.

Table 1.2 Required Physiognomic Map Attributes

3.2.2.2 Map Attributes

3.2.4.2 Produce a Mid-Level Existing Vegetation Map – Step 5

Physiognomic Classes Tables 3.3a and 3.3d

Table 3.2 Anderson 1 / FGDC Physiognomic Class

Table 3.3a Physiognomic Map Attributes

Table 3.3b Physiognomic Class – Order need to break out non-vascular from herbaceous

Table 3.16 Mid Level Mapping Methods

Table 3.17 Base Level Mapping Methods

Tables 3.21a and 3.21b Aggregation Logic

Table 3.22 Error Matrix Example

Table 3.3c Physiognomic Classes – Class

Table 3.3d Physiognomic Classes – Subclass

Table 3.4 Floristic Map Attributes

Figure 3.1 Map Units and Attribute Example

Table 3.7 Map Attributes Accuracy Goals and Requirements

3.2.3.3 Map Unit Design Example 1

Table 3.12 Physiognomic Type Classification Taxonomic Units and Map Units

Appendix 3G