



# USDA Forest Service Office of the Secretary Briefing Paper

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**Topic:** Existing Vegetation Classification, Mapping, and Inventory Technical Guide, Version 2.0.

**Background:** Classification and mapping of existing vegetation is fundamental to the stewardship, conservation, and appropriate use of National Forest System and State and private resources within the United States. Similar business needs extend to emerging issues associated with international forest and rangeland conservation efforts and practices. Accurate, consistent, and high quality classification and mapping of existing vegetation is critical for meeting agency business requirements for planning, assessments, inventory, and monitoring at various operational scales.

This technical guide employs a conceptual framework based on the relationships among vegetation classification, mapping, and inventory processes to provide vegetation information products needed to support Forest Service and partner decision making. It provides guidance for:

- Existing vegetation classification, which is the grouping of similar entities into named types or classes based on shared characteristics. Classification answers the question, “What is it?”
- Existing vegetation mapping, which is the process of delineating the geographic distribution, extent, and landscape patterns of vegetation types and structural characteristics. Mapping answers the question, “Where is it?”
- Existing vegetation inventory, that quantifies the amount, composition, and condition of vegetation types with known statistical precision. Inventory answers the question, “How much is there?”

**Issue:** The updated Existing Vegetation Technical Guide required cross-deputy collaboration and is now published on an external facing web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/rig/protocols/vegclassmapinv.shtml>).

**Key Points:**

- The Existing Vegetation Classification and Mapping Technical Guide, was originally published in 2005. Standards and technology have changed making the original guide obsolete.
- The revised guide is consistent with the Federal Geographic Data Committee additional vegetation classification standards. Consistent procedures for compliance with FGDC standards are essential to facilitate landscape-scale coordination across administrative units and with our conservation partners.
- The technical guide also includes geospatial and tabular database standards and guidelines that apply to existing vegetation data and information products.
- The revised technical guide is consistent with FSM 1940.
- The technical guide has a new chapter on inventory.

**Actions:** Promote the use of the Existing Vegetation Classification, Mapping and Inventory Technical Guide, Version 2.0

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