Stuff to do:
- Define contour lines more
- deine spatial checking more
  - make example images
    - Trainers
- re-add note about alpine
  - split into 2 biomes?
- Define freedom/wiggle room for town boundaries
  - plot

Please note: I made this document using the info and status of things as they exist now, changes to assets or content may require this information to be updated

Furthermore, I have written this document in a way so it can be understandable to even new mappers. it will go over things that you probably already know or seem obvious. it is important that this is the case.

Contents:
A: Introduction to and organization of region map file
B: Map legality
C: Detailing in terrain/Updating terrain layers
D: Changing region map, via in game maps or otherwise

Section A: Introduction to and organization of the region map file:

The current public version of the region map file (the region map that is used to overlay in-game maps onto) is located in the map dropbox as "region#" with some variation. Formats include XCF (GIMP) PSD (Photoshop), and possibly pngs. I recommend using the XCF version because the file was initially created in GIMP and I cannot guarantee the other files will work perfectly. Furthermore, I will be using GIMP terms in this document.

Even if you do not have either program (GIMP is free), it is likely your image editor can open the PSD version. If your image editor does not support layers, then you are SOL. If your computer is not very powerful, you may experience performance issues while the document is open: it is rather sizable. I suggest you do not have the map open along with other high performance programs running at the same time for this reason.

At this time, the current public version is very out of date, and I was waiting on plot to upload a new one, but I will do so soon; the details of this will be discussed as we review the document

There are 4 layer groups in the map file:Terrain, Route text, Key stuff, and In-game routes. (Please do not change any of the layer's transparency levels or visibility as they are set that way for a reason. If you do change it, make sure to return the settings back to normal before saving.)

The first three groups are used for the parts of the map.
- Route text: All the red labels for routes and other locations
- Key stuff contains the layers for stuff in the key/sidebar
- Terrain has layers for the colored grids squares, the underlying grid itself, which I have turned off most of the time, contour lines and terrain borders, and the underlying terrain/biomes, all on separate layers that can be turned on or off in any combination, or their transparency levels adjusted. Use these to help you aid in deciding map legality and assisting your understanding of the map

The last group actually deals with in-game route images.It contains overlays of screenshots of actual map files scaled to the region map. The scale is as follows: A map screenshotted at 1/2x zoom (the size of one tile being 16x16) in RPG maker must be scaled down to 18% of it's original size. IE: If the screenshot was originally 100x100, it should end up as 18x18. As of this time, interpolation settings for the scaling is unimportant. If the program will not allow you to scale the layer down by exactly 18%, any value within .5 % of either direction is acceptable. Ask me personally for input if it is more than that.

Section B: Map Legality:

Obviously, when checking map legality, you have to first import a complete screenshot of the map into the region map file and scale it down as described above. In regards to determining if a map is legal with the region map, there are various different aspects by which it has to fit: Conceptually, Visually, Spatially, etc.

It's important to note that unless you want to go super strict autism mode, it's impossible to entirely and comprehensively define the conditions, factors, and situations of how/why/if X or Y map is legal. There is wiggle room of varying amounts in regards to all of the above. No matter how much time I spend, how much detail I go into, or how many niche scenarios and situations I give examples for, there will likely still be a situation where the correct (if there is a correct one) judgement is unclear or debatable.

It's also worth nothing as I was making this document, I came up with some alternate ways to judge map legality, as well as some edits to some of the layers but that will be discussed separately.

That being said:

- **Conceptual checking**. Ensuring the map in question matches the concept of the location it is being designed for is obviously important, but it's also important it fits adjacent areas as well. For example, having route 7 be a lush field of flowers and streams and lakes would likely not be fine, since it is adjacent to a large, industrial city, and a dry, run down western town

  However, it's also important we do not allow headcanon to limit what is allowed or not allowed for our locations. We have very little information for what is confirmed for locations, and filling in backstory or conceptual elements for locations is going to be a process that involves mapping, dialog, and plot. Only deny passing if it truly breaks the concept, not just your headcanon, and ensure that the concept is explicitly confirmed.

○ In regards to biomes: While biomes have been voted in, they should be considered as suggestions/guidelines rather than hard rules. If you have a particular concept or idea you want to go with that does not follow the biomes, go for it, but otherwise, please stick to them. The exact perimeter of the biome spots is usually not important, and the beginnings and ends can be messed with some.

- In regards to contour lines: contour lines a
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- They are in the same category as biomes, but even less stringent. You do not need to ensure the elevation changed on the map itself matches the spots where the lines go through the map, nor must you follow the general elevation suggestions of them, but you should probably make an attempt to show that a map is high up if the lines say so, and so on. But if you can go the extra mile, and make it fit even more, then go for it! Keep in mind while contour line changes are logistically simple to do, with little bureaucracy involved, but they are one of the hardest parts of editing the map.

● **Visual checking.** Ensuring the visual design off the map matches the concept and purpose of the location it is for. Visual checking should be used to ensure the map makes sense given the location it is in, and matches up with adjacent areas in terms of visual consistency

This is similar but not identical to conceptual checking since it has more to do with how things are shown then what is shown. Ensure that if an adjacent area has yellow grass, that a transition is shown, ensure that the right types of tree tiles are used, etc. This is probably the least important factor since visual issues are usually easy to fix due to simply swapping out tiles. At the same time, because they are easy to fix, this can also usually be done quickly before passing legality. Handle this how you guys want, as long as it is handled.

A good example of visual consistency in regards to maps is cave color. Caves in high elevations or cold areas should have a grey/purple/blue hue to them. Otherwise brown. More colors can be introduced later as needed. Other examples are choice of tree tiles, grasses, cliffs, water, etc.

● **Spatial checking**: Making sure the map actually fits the layout of routes and locations on the region map. This is arguably the most important part of map legality, and is the most often misunderstood. I do not require or expect maps to match up 100% with the region map.

The most important thing to keep in mind here is that the connections between locations need to be accurate to how the grid route layout shows it.The maps themselves can extend outside of the boundaries of the grids of that location along the other axis, but they cannot intersect with another location's grids, and they must roughly follow the layout of the grids that exists. This means that for a horizontal route, bits of the map can extend out vertically to a reasonable degree as long as they do not intersect with another route or location, but the extents of the map cannot extend past the connecting locations on the left or right end of it. Furthermore, this also means locations that are dead ends, or do not have any other locations beyond them in a certain direction can more or less be any size mappers want.

An example of this would be Dronia and Route 8/Sunken Ship. As long as the bottom left corner of the map is the point of alignment, and the exits to route 7 and 9 remain in the same location, Dronia can be as tall or wide as mappers want, within reason.

- ○ Caves, forests, and other enclosed areas can be treated as pocket dimensions and can intersect with other locations to a reasonable degree

- ○ "Limbo space" exists where the connection between two maps is just a straight path that doesn't include anything of relevance..The exact amount of and types of limbo space that is allowable is dependent on the exact occurrence, and as such any incidence of it should be discussed with others to deterimine if it requires instant resolution.In short, you should not use this as an excuse to pass maps, nor should maps be made with this fact in mind. It something to be avoided, not encouraged.

- ○ The grid does not have consistent sizing with the width of the black lines between grids. Treat those black lines as wiggle room.

- ○ Connections between locations should not be set up in a way where the connection is most accurately shown via grid as a diagonal connection. What Dacapo to Route 1 does is a perfect example of what NOT to do.

- ○ Town and city sizes can vary much more from their size as shown on the region map, due to the fact that the region map was originally designed purely by grids before everything was scaled,and towns were shown as a single grid then and still are. A single grid town can be feasibly expanded ½ of a grid space in all directions, and override route maps in terms of if they conflict.

Section C: Detailing in terrain/Updating terrain layers

One the alignment for a set of map overlays has been finalized, the terrain and grid should be edited to match. This will make lining up future maps much easier. This includes, but is not limited to:
- Editing the coastline of the land to match the coast in the map (6.5 brush size, hardness 1.0 brush, pencil tool)
- Editing contour lines to match the rough elevation changes that occur in the map. (5.5 brush size, hardness 1.0 brush, paintbrush tool)
  - ○ Please note in the alpine and desert biomes, the color of the biome changes with elevation steps of contour lines
- Editing the map grids to more accurately match the map overlay, including grid color.
- Moving or editing location name text layers to match new positions of said map grids

Section D: Changing the region map

Last section, you may have noticed you are modifying the foundation that you based the legality of the map on to match the map. This may seem contradictory, but it is not. Actual in game map files override the terrain layers. The reason I did not state this earlier is because even so, they still represent a guideline that in game maps just follow. You should be approving maps with the assumption that issues cannot be fixed later. Better to spend more time now fixing issues then have them build up and multiply to cause a ton of work later.

Aside from changing the terrain and grid layers to match voted in maps, the region map can only be changed to fix errors or consistency problems. There's no official definition for either of those, but I define them as such::

- An ERROR fix is correcting a mistake, flaw, or other factually incorrect information on the map. Examples of this include but are not limited to:

    - Grid colors not matching the underlying terrain/biome layers
    - Misspellings on the map or sidebar
    - Updating false or outdated information
    - Adjusting the location or layout of route text or sidebar text
    - Fixing out of bounds colors on the biome layer
    - Updating out of date in game map overlays

    All error fixes can be made without thread consultation, but please update the region map on the wiki (excluding game overlays) as well as the XCF and PSD files in the Dropbox. (please do not replace the existing one, rename the old one to say "OLD" in the name so it is still present)

- A CONSISTENCY fixes are more complicated. ==They are mostly covered by in section C,== but there are a few ones that are not. In general, these can be summed up as "Changes made to the layout of the region map to accommodate/correct conflicts with other official info, potential issues, and so on"

    Following up on the note below, there are some additional changes I would personally allow, but I won't go into them here because I don't want to spend any more time on this damn thing. Consistency fixes, or any changes other than fixing basic errors, MUST be discussed with other mappers, the thread consulted, and if there is contention, surveyed.

    - If you want to be technical, a lot of things I would potentially allow via consistency changes are outside the scope of the survey that ruled those are the 2 conditions we allow changes. At the time, skype and the thread was arguing no changes whatsoever would be allowed to the region map, not to fix errors, consistency problems between it and other official information, nor the sidebar, nothing. I was able to get that survey made by draik to allow problems to be fixed.

    - Of course, now, people are more willing to change things then when I asked, and we have since found out the region map that was around back when was never intended to be that final, and that more details would be locked in later. Due to that fact, the survey defining when changes were allowed was made under false pretenses. However, it is still legal due to the fact the previous survey did specify that changes would be locked down more down the line, which the survey in question did do.