

ESA Vegetation Panel Semiannual Meeting

August 6, 2024

Hyatt Regency, Pacific Room, Long Beach, California

In-Person: Robert Peete, Patrick McIntyre, Don Faber-Langendoen, Rachelle Boul, Mario Bretfeld, Joe Rocchio, Este Muldavin, Julie Evens, Hazel Gordon, Jeffrey Ott, Anne Davidson, Marji Patz, Michelle DePrenger-Levin, Adrienne Sponberg, Alexis Conley, Jessica Burnett

On Zoom: Carol Spurrier, Alan Weakley, Kyle Palmquist, Aaron Wells, Mark Wiltermuth, Alexa McKerrow, Jack Triepke

Adrienne provided some background on ESA's future plans and her new role for ESA beginning November 1. At the time Alexis will be the primary ESA Staff member to work with the Veg Panel. Christi Nam will oversee Panel activities as Director of Conventions and Meetings. Adrienne emphasized ESA's desire to extend partnerships outside of academia including NASA and NNA and to coordinate with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Introductions of all participants. Alexis will compile a list of current membership of the group and make available to panel.

Este highlighted the updated Strategic Plan he emailed to the panel that morning.

Committee Reports

Communications

Mario reported on the new banner that is up at the booth as well as a QR code that is up linking to the USNVC.org homepage. We will update the group photo by taking one today.

The committee has not had a meeting in a while. However, the framework and technological side of the newsletter is ready. The general idea is to send out 1-2 emails per year. We will add those who signed up at the booth. There was a question about tracking down the 2023 list. The committee will reach out to panel to see who wants to contribute or write the newsletter, but most likely the committee or subcommittee will write. The Panel will receive a draft newsletter for proofread before dispersal. Bob asked about further efforts to recruit recipients. There was a suggestion to look at NatureServe network, Veg Section of ESA, and federal agencies.

There was a discussion about who is responsible for updating the websites and what is ESA's role in websites? Adrienne has told ESA tech folks that USNVC is moving to ESA

and will reach out to Alexa and Mark to start process. Adrienne and Alexis will lead this effort to streamline the migration. Don and Este may be needed to help with this. There was also a discussion about the Panel's role in keeping the content of the website fresh. It was suggested that a frequency of twice a year for examination and updates.

Mapping

Rachelle reported that the committee is focusing on website content. Examples of mapping applications of USNVC from a broad view to smaller scale with the goal of focusing on key examples. They have 4-5 done. They are ready to have the conversation to update website and get feedback on what else needs to be done. Julie said they are 80% done and need feedback so it was suggested to send a beta version out to the panel for review. They scaled back on verbiage to make the site more accessible. There will be a review of links and will have updates for that. There was a question of the potential for more education/outreach, but at this point it was decided that the efforts should focus on finishing.

Science Applications Committee:

No updates from the committee at this time. It was decided that a call to go over the white paper will occur in September. Alexis will set up this call.

Veg Bank (this section most likely needs edits/inputs)

Rachelle said they plan to update the servers and are putting the team together. They have meetings every 3rd Wednesday of the month. Equipment has been purchased to move forward. Bob and Mike Lee participating and plans for a March 2026 completion date.

Bob discussed potential for synergistic efforts with the other vegetation databanks as there are 5 booths at ESA Conference with overlapping missions. Down the road the Panel could explore adding new modules. There was also a discussion about streamlining the submission process to Veg Bank.

Marji Patz (USDA NRCS) said that they would like to use Veg Bank to host their data. There are some issues with privacy of data. She would like to be a part of the panel. Alexis is to reach out to her. Hazel pointed out that USDA has great soil data which is needed in database.

Rachelle said there is a need for discussions on how to have a pilot for data sharing.

Jessica Burnett, NASA Earth Science, Ecological Conservation, introduced herself. The Panel expressed a desire to have more NASA presence on the Panel.

Hazel asked if the USFS Forest Inventory and Analysis program is still ongoing, and if it would be a good source for Veg Bank. Same privacy issues were noted as well as the need for a key. Also noted is the issue of scaling. It was agreed that looking at it is a great discussion to have in the future.

Rachelle reiterated that the focus of efforts should be completion of the framework and to get USNVC running. While ultimately there is a desire to be able to complement and harvest from other datasets.

Technical Guide:

Anne Davidson reported that an Overview, History, and Hierarchy sections have been tackled but that the technical guide is in preliminary stages. A lot of discussion about what to include ensued. Anne will incorporate feedback and pull resources together. She will start the narrative and reach out to see if others want to assist. Anne can delegate pieces. Once a draft is ready, Alexis will help organize the draft reviews.

USNVC Version 3.0 update

Don discussed some of the key components of the roll out of USNVC 3.0.

1. For the database/biotics AQ/QC process, more money is needed. The goal is to make the LANDFIRE data as accurate as possible without losing details. Once completed, the group map will be 1.0. Carol asked if funding beyond the \$100K Forest Service provided for the QA/QC of the Group maps needed? This remains to be answered.

2. The review of the Groups has been a 5 year review process. Don provided the panel with a spreadsheet on July 15. There is information on who wrote the current description in the alliance. There is a column for undescribed types. You can go in and sign up to review on the spreadsheet. At this time, we are asking the peer review board to engage with a preference for people to pick a group to review.

Knowing that not everyone can access One Drive, it is still not decided how documents get delivered to reviewers so this is something that needs to be determined.

Kyle suggested sending out a call to authors and reviewers for group and alliance descriptions.

The Panel has set a deadline of Thanksgiving to complete all Group descriptions,

There is a style guide to give guidance on descriptions

USNVC 3.0 Roll Out

Don outlined a potential phased approach to release of USNVC 3.0. Discussion about what that would look like ensued. After much discussion before as well as after lunch, the Panel agreed on the following:

1. January 1, 2025: Roll out of USNVC 3.0 with all Groups completed (description and QA/QC). Website will be updated by USGS after description and QA/QC. Press release will be worked up once all group maps completed. Mario will be involved with press release, and he said he will need some help with big take home message of 3.0.

Additional notes: Kyle discussed the API query. She suggested that they get the API query sorted out and USGC supports the back end of the data base on ESA page after all Groups completed and the QA/QC is done. Then they can update.

Julie noticed an Alliance wasn't listed for CA; Don showed her how to add.

Patrick discussed work on group map IVC 0.9 derived from the LandFire 2022 ecological systems map, which will be 1.0 with launch of USNVC 3.0. They fixed errors in mapping and have 82% crosswalk from ecological systems to groups. It took a lot more time to fix the 82% than planned. From the Group map review there will be an update with "replacement" maps where better mapped data are available. There was a Group vs ecological system debate and they found that plot data resulted in better map in LANDFIRE due to smaller size plots.

A question about how LANDFIRE feels about the process of using the revised USNVC group map. The LANDFIRE team most likely will maintain that USNVC driven by LANDFIRE products but will note that it is not their product. It was pointed out that it is confusing to have 2 different Group maps LANDFIRE and USNVC. Anne said she will talk to LANDFIRE to take down the 2016 Group map. Joe pointed out that LANDFIRE does not have updates for Washington state. It was also stressed that it is important to allow local users who know the landscape have a voice. And to highlight things you could do with conservation map such as identifying at risk ecosystems.

2. Summer 2025: Complete any remaining Association descriptions and press release for USNVC 3.01

3. Publications

USFS group descriptions GTR is waiting on funding to get in place. A draft mock up was shown.

This will be developed in parallel with Anne's guide

Peer Review Board

Don posed the question of what the Peer Review Board (PRB) will look like after the launch of 3.0. He is planning to step back from Editor in Chief (EIC) role in March 2025.

Don presented proposal on restructuring the PRB into regional workgroups each led by a regional editor (sent out by Alexis on July 25). The EIC will act primarily as a coordinator to oversee the work of the regional editors who will become the driving force of the PRB. The Panel will decide how the review process will work. The hope is that when members of a regional group need funding there could be some core funding with

the chair of the regional group. A challenge for heritage network programs unless it was part of their job to do the work. The Panel will have to work to attract people who want to do the regional reviews. A question was posed about what happens with gaps in editors. Don thinks that with 3.0 it will be obvious to know there are gaps. Don asked how do we begin recruiting regional editors.

It was decided to give everyone a chance to read the document, and it will be discussed further at the next quarterly Panel call.

There was also a discussion about the number of regional recruits that makes sense. The Panel should clearly identify the role of the regional editors. What is the work involved? What are their responsibilities? There were concerns that the regional editor workload will go up exponentially. It was noted that this shift is necessary, but it will not be smooth or easy to accomplish without the resources to fund people's time. Appreciation was given to Don as his efforts as the "engine" and his role with user would have to be replicated across regional editors. Este expressed hope that 3.0 generates funding.

Finally, it was agreed that a steering committee would work on the EIC change and the delivery of 3.0. The steering committee would consist of Este, Don, Adrienne, Alexis, Mark, and Mario.

Timeframe to complete Group level: By Thanksgiving 2024, which gives us about 12 weeks to complete. Don said he needs the regional editors to tell him how long it might take to complete groups. Rachelle said she won't know how long until she can look at the spreadsheet Don sent in more detail. Don will take on whatever the Regional editors can't tackle and that he will line up the commitments week of 8/12. He said 95% of the groups are already written but that descriptions need to be reviewed in case revisions are needed. Todd Will be asked if he can contribute for California. Don will report back August 19 week if the editors can achieve their group review by Thanksgiving.

Ultimate goal is 3.0 release January 2025

Special Session Work

After lightening talks tomorrow, it was suggested that the presenters have some proposed questions rather than just have them ask themselves

Mario gathered questions

How would you use usnvc in your work,

How could you integrate your work into usnvc?

Are there limitations to usnvc in certain regions?

Can you name places/fields unnvc could be incorporated?

Conservation planning in their state and how could they be doing more?

Final action items for Alexis:

Update website

Curate a list of state heritage programs

Update list of panel members on website

Final action items for all Committees

A steering committee in the first two week of September and monthly afterwards

Every committee should plan to meet 2x before Thanksgiving

Este will reach out to Scott re: Science Committee

Need to set the next panel call.