

The FGDC Biological Data Working Group

The Biological Data Working Group of the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) was created in 1997 to promote activities and standards that improve collection, use, sharing, and dissemination of biological resources data among government agencies and other interested institutions. Working under the auspices of the FGDC, the Working Group helps to increase understanding of and participation in the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) and the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) among individuals and organizations involved in research, inventory and monitoring, and management of biological resources.

The Working Group includes members from several different Federal agencies (including the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Science Foundation, Smithsonian Institution, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Department of Defense) as well as from non-government organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, the Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) network, and the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis. Membership is open to all interested agencies and organizations which are involved or interested in biological data collection, application, and exchange.

MAJOR GOALS OF THE WORKING GROUP

Support Biological Data Standards Development:

Within the context of the FGDC's procedures and practices, help to promote and coordinate the development, refinement, and implementation of

needed standards and protocols for facilitating collection, exchange, sharing, and application of biological data. Help integrate biological data standards activities into the National Spatial Data Infrastructure and the National Biological Information Infrastructure and help link FGDC biological data standards with other biological data standards activities at the national or international levels.

Promote Interagency/Intergovernmental Partnerships for Biological Data Sharing:

Increase understanding and awareness of the respective biological data collection, management, and dissemination activities and programs of the member agencies and organizations of the Working Group and of other non-member agencies and organizations. Identify and help encourage interagency and intergovernmental partnerships for sharing and leveraging resources, collaboration on standards and tools development, and other measures.

Provide Outreach to Biological Sciences/Biological Resources Management Communities:

Communicate the goals, and objectives of the NSDI and NBII and the benefits of participation in the NSDI/NBII to existing and prospective participants, with a particular focus on expanding the understanding and awareness within the biological sciences/biological resources communities. Help expand and increase the applicability and pertinence of NSDI/NBII practices, standards, etc. for use in facilitating collection, exchange, sharing, and application of biological data.

Identify Linkages with other FGDC activities:

Identify and facilitate linkages and areas of potential cooperation with other FGDC subcommittees, activities, and standards as they relate to biology and biological data (e.g., Vegetation Subcommittee, Wetlands Subcommittee). Help to identify and fill any gaps in terms of standards which are not currently being addressed within FGDC and which are needed to help provide the foundation to support biological data exchange and sharing.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP

Current emphases of the Working Group include coordinating the development of two key data standards for the NSDI/NBII: a Biological Data Profile of the FGDC geospatial metadata standard and a Biological Nomenclature and Taxonomy Data Standard. In accord with FGDC operating procedures, these standards are developed collaboratively by the Working Group and other interested participants, presented for full public review and comment, and submitted for endorsement by the full FGDC.

The proposed Biological Data Profile of the FGDC Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Metadata (http://www.fgdc.gov/standards/status/sub5_2.html) provides a useful, consistent format for the biological sciences/biological resources communities to use in describing/documenting biological data sets and information products. The Working Group has cooperated with the American Institute of Biological

Sciences to help provide a national-level peer review of this new standard by a panel of non-federal biological scientists.

The proposed Biological Nomenclature and Taxonomy Data Standard will help in the discovery, exchange, and integration of distributed biological data sets in which the same biological species may be identified under two or more different scientific names. Representatives from the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS <http://www.itis.usda.gov/itis>) interagency partnership are also participating in the development of this standard.

For More Information

Visit the FGDC Biological Data Working Group web site at:

<http://biology.usgs.gov/fgdc.bio/index.html>

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