

INVESTING IN KNOWLEDGE


APRIL 27, 2010

BIODIVERSITY
WITHOUT
BOUNDARIES



NatureServe
A Network Connecting Science With Conservation

2004: NatureServe initiates the Data Excellence Initiative



Data Excellence Program: Summary of Products and Deliverables

NatureServe maintains a unique and critical national resource – the most comprehensive, high-quality data on the location and status of at risk species and natural ecosystems. This dataset and accompanying expertise represents a 30-year investment in collection, compilation, application of standard methodology and quality assurance.

Ensuring the continued integrity and value of this national resource requires many activities that cannot be directly allocated to projects. NatureServe funds these activities, collectively described as our Data Excellence Program, through a combination of private sector funding, endowment income, approved overhead costs, building direct costs into projects whenever possible, and a proposed U.S. federal government investment. These activities result in a number of specific products that are updated continuously and delivered to federal agencies each year.

MAJOR PRODUCTS OF THE DATA EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

1. Comprehensive, nationally consistent, high-quality data set on species and ecosystems, including more than half a million documented population locations for those of greatest conservation concern.
2. Conservation status assessments for nearly 50,000 native and exotic plant and animal species and sub-species.
3. Taxonomic and geographic updates to ensure accuracy of all data sets.
4. Development of new data on trends and threats to those species and habitats of greatest concern to federal agencies.
5. Regular data exchange with all U.S. member programs to ensure national data integration and quality assurance.
6. Public provision of all non-sensitive data via NatureServe Explorer Website.
7. Annual Benchmark Data Standards Report from NatureServe with metrics on the quality and quantity of our key data sets.
8. Extensive user support and training programs.
9. Development and support of Biotics software, the customized biodiversity data management system used across the national network of natural heritage programs.
10. Coordinating our network of natural heritage programs, consisting of data providers in all 50 states.
11. Advancing scientific standards and methods in cooperation with federal and state data users to ensure data meet quality standards required for public scrutiny and legal challenges.

NATURESERVE DATA: A CRITICAL NATIONAL RESOURCE

U.S. federal government agencies rely on these data for many mission-critical purposes:

- Informs land and natural resource management decisions.
- Guides investments in conservation and incentive programs.
- Provides basis for regulatory actions.
- Assists in compliance with key legislation, including Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and NEPA.
- Contributes to performance evaluation under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and other monitoring of results.
- Supports meeting obligations under international treaties such as CITES.

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- Objective: Invest in the quality and consistency of the national data sets
- Includes both species and ecosystems
- Estimated cost \$4M annually
- Network members mobilized

Major Products

1. Nationally consistent data
2. Status assessments, threats and trends for 50,000+ species
3. Rollup of state spatial data for national applications
4. Delivery via NatureServe Explorer
5. Quality assurance based on benchmark data standards, with annual report
6. User support and training programs
7. Continuous improvement in Biotics
8. Coordination of states to fill critical data gaps



Key Messages

- Eight federal agencies depend on NatureServe network data
- Federal government can leverage state and private investments
- Better data will lead to:
 - Improved management decisions
 - Higher impact investments in conservation and incentive programs
 - More confidence in data for regulatory actions
 - Better compliance with key legislation

2010 initiatives require better cross-border information sharing

- Emphasis on large landscapes for:
 - Setting priorities within a larger context
 - Addressing climate change at regional level
 - Providing options for mitigation of impacts
- New initiatives with evolving scope
 - Data needs not clarified
 - Expectation of ready access to data when needed

Driving factors

USA

- USGS support for SWAPs and taxonomy (ITIS)
- FWS Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs)
- Reauthorization of Transportation Bill
- All budgets expected to decline – except defense
- Private efforts: Freedom to Roam, Energy by Design

Canada

- Species At Risk Act (SARA) growing pains – critical habitat and species declines

Latin America

- Infrastructure development
- Millennium development goals

Carpe Diem

- How can we seize this moment to reinvest?
- What is the business case today?
 - Definition of need / key stakeholders
 - Why NatureServe? – unique strengths
 - Rebuilding capacity across the network
 - Required resources

