

Working Group on EcoInformatics

2005

Numerous research institutions and national agencies have established databanks for species composition data that serve a multitude of purposes ranging from purely scientific to applications in nature conservation and landscape planning. Simultaneously, massive amounts of spatially explicit data on site attributes (e.g. climate, soils, topography) have become available and comprehensive data on specific taxa (e.g. distribution, phylogeny, life-history traits, functional attributes) are becoming available. This emerging availability of large quantities of species co-occurrence, site attribute, and taxon attribute data is transforming the study of ecological communities. The IAVS Working Group for Eco-informatics was formed to facilitate access to, and analysis of, such data. In particular, we wish to (1) establish standards for data exchange to facilitate data sharing; (2) provide tools for data identification, access, integration, storage, and analysis; (3) facilitate communication among scientists studying community ecology through exploration of multiple large databases. We invite vegetation scientists from around the world to join us in this enterprise.

We currently are focused on development of an XML schema and data exchange standard for plot data. In March 2005 we held a short discussion at the European Eco-informatics meeting in Halle. At that meeting Bob Peet (representing the *VegBank.org*), Stephan Hennekens (representing *TurboVeg*), and Rudi May and Martin Kleinkamp (representing *VegetWeb*) agreed to collaborate toward this end. Bob is attempting to find funding for this effort through the US National Science Foundation, and Susan Wiser is looking for funding through the New Zealand government. We will let the Working Group members know when and if we have any progress to report.

Our Working Group plans to sponsor a session on a topic in eco-informatics at the February 2007 IAVS meeting in New Zealand. Please send your suggestions for content to Bob Peet or Susan Wiser (WiserS@landcareresearch.co.nz).

The Working Group maintains a website as well as an E-mail mailing list to which you can subscribe:
<http://cvs.bio.unc.edu/iavs-ecoinfo/>
http://lists.unc.edu/read/all_forums/subscribe?name=vegdata%20.