

United States National Vegetation Classification Database

Release of the USNVC 2.01 for the Conterminous U.S.!



In August 2017 newly inducted content of the U.S. National Vegetation Classification is being made available through the USNVC.org website. This release represents new USNVC Hierarchy based on the FGDC Vegetation Subcommittee's 2008 Standard (FGDC 2008). Table 1 below provides the current status of the classification by hierarchy level and geography. This release includes descriptions at all levels of the hierarchy. . The current focus for the FGDC Vegetation Subcommittee and the ESA Vegetation Panel is now on implementing the peer review process and providing changes to the classification through the USNVC database after changes have been formally adopted through the peer review process. Changes to the classification for be formally published through the ESA Vegetation Panel's [Proceedings of the USNVC](#).

How often should the NVC be updated?

The ESA Vegetation Panel in coordination with the Federal Geographic Data Committee's Vegetation Subcommittee agreed that the NVC's upper levels (L1-L5) should not change (except due to minor concept edits) more frequently than every five years. Lower levels (L6-L8) would change on a rolling basis. The proceedings will be published officially on a yearly basis. Users will always be able to use the official published version, or a more recent version during that calendar year by referencing changes published on a certain date. Hopefully this approach would result in having a robust national classification in place as quickly as possible and meeting user needs (in terms of stability) as time goes on.

To cite the USNVC Database:

USNVC (United States National Vegetation Classification) Database. Federal Geographic Data Committee, Vegetation Subcommittee. Washington D.C. Date Month Year Accessed.

To cite a specific type description:

Author(s). publicationYear. Description Title [last revised revisionDate]. United States National Vegetation Classification. Federal Geographic Data Committee, Washington, D.C.

About spatial standards

The United States Federal Geographic Data Committee (hereafter called the FGDC) is tasked to develop geospatial data standards that will enable sharing of spatial data among producers and users and support the growing National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI), acting under the Office of Management Budget (OMB) Circular A-16 (OMB 1990, 2000) and Executive Order #12906 (Clinton 1994) as amended by Executive Order #13286 (Bush 2003). FGDC subcommittees and working groups, in consultation and cooperation with state, local, tribal, private, academic, and international communities, develop standards for the content, quality, and transferability of geospatial data. FGDC standards are developed through a structured process, integrated with one another to the extent possible, supportable by the current vendor community (but are independent of specific technologies), and publicly available.

Table 1. Status of the USNVC Natural Vegetation Hierarchy , June 2017

Upper Levels					
Formation Class	Concepts & Descriptions written by the Hierarchy Revisions Working Group (HRWG), reviewed by ESA Panel and international experts. Report completed in 2014. Publication completed 2016 (U.S. Forest Service Technical Report).				
Formation Subclass					
Formation					
	Conterminous U.S.	Alaska	Hawai'i	Caribbean	Pacific Islands
Middle Levels					
Division	Concepts and descriptions written and reviewed by ESA Panel in collaboration with Canadian NVC partners. Completed FY2016.				
Macrogroup	Concepts written Concepts peer reviewed	Draft concepts written Concepts need peer review	Draft types identified Concepts need peer review	Draft types identified Concepts need peer review	No draft types Concepts needed Concepts need peer review
Group	Concepts written Concepts peer reviewed Ongoing concept improvements needed using plot-based analyses.	Concepts written Concepts need peer review Ongoing concept improvements needed using plot analyses.	Concepts written Concepts need peer review	Concepts written Concepts need peer review	Concepts needed Concepts need peer review
Lower Levels					
Alliance	Concepts written Concepts peer reviewed ¹ Ongoing concept improvements needed using plot-based analyses	Concepts in very draft form by AK Heritage Program Peer review and integration with USNVC needed	Concepts incomplete Peer review and integration with USNVC needed	Concepts incomplete Peer review and integration with USNVC needed	No concepts available
Association	Concepts written Concepts peer reviewed ¹ Ongoing concept improvements needed using plot-based analyses	Concepts in very draft form by AK Heritage Program Peer review and integration with USNVC needed	Concepts incomplete Peer review and integration with USNVC needed	Concepts incomplete Peer review and integration with USNVC needed	No concepts available

About this database

This database contains type descriptions for natural vegetation at all levels of the U.S. National Vegetation Classification. These descriptions were primarily written by NatureServe ecologists in collaboration with Federal Geographic Data Committee Vegetation Subcommittee and a wide variety of state, federal and private partners as a part of the implementation of the National Vegetation Classification. Formation descriptions were written by the Hierarchy Revisions Working Group. The descriptions are based on consultation with natural resource professionals, published literature, and other vegetation classification systems. The Ecological Society of America's Panel on Vegetation Classification is responsible for managing the review and formal adoption of these types into the National Vegetation Classification. Partners involved in the implementation of the USNVC include:

U.S. Government

- Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Department of Commerce (DOC)
- Department of Defense (DOD)
- Department of the Interior (USDI)
- Forest Service (FS) - Chair
- National Agriculture Statistical Service (NASS)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Navy (NAVY)
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
- National Park Service (NPS)
- U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

Non U.S. Government

- NatureServe (NS)
- Ecological Society of America (ESA)

Disclaimer

Given the dynamic nature of the standard, it is possible a type description is incomplete or in revision at the time of download; therefore, users of the data should track the date of access and read the revisions section of the USNVC.org website to understand the current status of the classification. While USNVC data have undergone substantial review prior to posting, it is possible that some errors or inaccuracies have remained undetected.

For information on the process used to develop these descriptions see:

Faber-Langendoen, D., T. Keeler-Wolf, D. Meidinger, D. Tart, B. Hoagland, C. Josse, G. Navarro, S. Ponomarenko, J.-P. Saucier, A. Weakley, P. Comer. 2014. EcoVeg: A New Approach to Vegetation Description and Classification. Ecological Monographs 84:533-561 (erratum 85:471).

Franklin, S., D. Faber-Langendoen, M. Jennings, T. Keeler-Wolf, O. Loucks, A. McKerrrow, R.K. Peet, and D. Roberts. 2012. Building the United States National Vegetation Classification. *Annali di Botanica* 2: 1-9.

Jennings, M. D., D. Faber-Langendoen, O. L. Louckes, R. K. Peet, and D. Roberts. 2009. Standards for associations and alliances of the U.S. National Vegetation Classification. *Ecological Monographs* 79(2):173-199.

FGDC [Federal Geographic Data Committee]. 2008. Vegetation Classification Standard, FGDC-STD-005, Version 2. Washington, DC., USA. [http://www.fgdc.gov/standards/projects/FGDC-standards-projects/vegetation/NVCS_V2_FINAL_2008-02.pdf]

For additional information contact:

- Implementation of the U.S. National Vegetation Classification Standard - Alexa McKerrrow (amckerrrow@usgs.gov)
- NatureServe's Development of NVC Type Descriptions - Don Faber-Langendoen (don_faber-langendoen@naturereserve.org)
- Ecological Society of America's Review of the Type Descriptions Scott.Franklin@unco.edu
- Federal Geographic Data Committee – Vegetation Subcommittee's Activities - Marianne Burke (mburke@fs.fed.us)