

California Biodiversity Council  
Science Coordinating Committee  
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
For Cooperative Vegetation and Habitat Mapping and Classification  
**BRIEFING NOTES**  
July 13, 2000

- **Why is vegetation data important?**
  - Vegetation maps provide some of the most important natural resource data needed by natural resource professionals. This data helps biologists and planners to identify potential habitat for T&E and other species, to identify potential impacts from land use changes, and to track the status and trends of habitat.
  
- **Why do we need this MOU?** This MOU will help address the following problems:
  - Poor Existing Statewide Data -No statewide map of vegetation exists that meets the accuracy and precision needs of field workers. The most recent statewide vegetation map (develop by the UC Gap Analysis Program) is over 5 years old. It contains many errors, it is not consistent with current national (and state) classification system, and it is too coarse for field-level work .
  - Lack of Standard Approaches - Many agencies are currently engaged in vegetation mapping, but they are usually using different methods and standards. For example, USFS and CDF are collaborating on regional mapping efforts, but this is being done differently than mapping efforts elsewhere by DFG. Local governments are also mapping vegetation at the local level.
  - Difficulties in Integrating Data - The different methods for vegetation mapping makes it almost impossible to integrate these different data sets into a statewide map.
  - Difficulties in Sharing Data - Some agencies have been reluctant to share vegetation map data, field collected data, and other types of source data.
  - Unnecessary Duplication - Poor coordination between agencies results in unnecessary duplication of effort, higher costs, and products that cannot be readily used by others.
  - Ongoing Updates Needed - Mapped data needs to regularly updated because vegetation changes with changes in land use (for example, urban expansion) or natural phenomenon (for example, fires, flooding)
  
- **Who developed it? What support exists? What opposition?**
  - The CBC Science Coordinating Committee is providing overall coordination of this effort and similar data coordination efforts. The SCC consists of data experts from federal, state, and local agencies and universities (see attached charter) and focuses on improving the quality, integration, and access of statewide natural resource data.

- The SCC is currently working to improve interagency coordination on data for sensitive species, vegetation, watershed delineation, rivers and waterbodies, landuse, terrestrial wildlife, land ownership, remote imagery, and fire ecology. The Committee has established focused Teams for each of these topics and works with team leaders to develop and promote formal agreements when they are needed to help facilitate Interagency coordination
  - The SCC's Vegetation Team has developed this specific MOU for vegetation mapping. Support for the agreement comes from all Team members, consisting of representatives from five state agencies (CDF, DFG, DPR, DWR, and Caltrans), seven federal agencies (USFS, BLM, USGS, USFWS, NPS, USBR, and NRCS), and four universities (UCD, UCR, SDSU, and HSU)
  - No known opposition exists to this agreement
- **How will it be implemented?**
    - The Vegetation Team will implement this MOU. The Team has been meeting regularly for over a year and it has established good working relationships among members. Efforts are already underway informally to develop mapping standards, integrate existing data into identified standards and initiate a coordinated regional mapping project.
    - A implementation plan for the MOU is currently being developed
- **What will it cost?**

The MOU focuses on using existing funding more wisely, although additional future funding of regional mapping efforts will be necessary to maintain an accurate statewide map
- **Next steps**
    - SCC is currently seeking signatures, initially from USFS, BLM, DFG, CDF, DPR, USBR, and UC
    - At the CBC Executive Committee meeting on July 27, Team leaders will discuss implementation steps
    - At the Sept 20 CBC meeting, the MOU will be announced and other organizations will be invited to join the agreement