

SUMMARY

Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve (CRMO) Vegetation Classification and Mapping Project Planning and Kick-off Meeting May 3 and May 4, 2006

Participants:

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- Gwen Kittel – NatureServe, 303-541-0364,
- Dan Cogan – CTI, 815-858-3483, dancogan@cogantech.com
- John Erixson – Northwest Management Inc (NMI), 208-883-4488, erixson@consulting-foresters.com
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- Tess O'Sullivan, Ecologist (tess@lavalake.net)

Background:

A comprehensive planning and kick-off meeting was held at Craters of the Moon National Monument on May 3rd and 4th. This meeting covered a wide range of topics related to the vegetation classification and mapping project. The meeting was structured for discussion of the national vegetation mapping program scope and past approaches, discussing and outlining important project tasks, and discussing the timeline and staffing necessary to complete the project. Following the formal meeting, the field crews were trained on a representative vegetation sample plot conducted by NatureServe ecologist, Gwen Kittel. Following training two field crews started field work that will continue for approximately two months.

Cooperation:

Multiple neighbors of CRMO attended this meeting and presented opportunities for future cooperation and sharing of common data, approaches, maps, etc. Potential cooperators for CRMO include the following:

- The Idaho National Lab lands to the east and south of CRMO are in the preliminary stages of conducting their own vegetation mapping effort. They mentioned using some of the same procedures as the NPS effort and would like to be kept up-dated on the project. Also, they would very much like to pursue partnering for the acquisition of new aerial photography- possibly next year.
- The Lava Lake Land and Livestock Company to the north and east of CRMO has a completed vegetation map. They would like to have their map linked to CRMO's map and would also like to be kept up-dated on the project.
- BLM representatives attended the meeting on the first day and presented potential existing data that could be used for the CRMO project. This data will be reviewed by Steve Rust from the Idaho Conservation Data Center (CDC) and Gwen Kittel from NatureServe.

Summary:

The meeting began at 9:00 am on Wednesday morning with introductions, an overview of CRMO, an overview of the Upper Columbia Basin Network, a review of the National Vegetation Classification by NatureServe, a review of the preliminary plant associations by CDS, and a summary of the vegetation mapping project. Klara Varga from Grand Teton National Park provided a lessons learned perspective from a recently completed vegetation mapping project. The first day was completed by taking a guided tour of the Park by Doug Owens, to better understand the ecosystems, their environmental drivers, and CRMO's unique geology.

The second day of meetings began Thursday at 9:00 am with a continuation of the project overview followed by group discussions. During this time the following project specifics were decided:

- The project boundary will include a standard 2-km environs
- The minimum mapping unit will be ½ hectare except for mapping units that are of particular concern to CRMO (i.e. Park Specials).
- Special effort will be made to sample a majority of the Kipukas (islands of vegetation in the lava flows that were not covered by lava and represent undisturbed vegetation).
- Considerable time will be spent sampling the interior of CRMO where little data exists.
- Exotic species such as leafy spurge, knapweed, and rush skeletonweed will be noted by the field crews and GPS coordinates will be provided to CRMO.
- The CDC will review the existing or legacy data to determine its usefulness.
- Limber pine communities will receive special attention during the sampling and classification stages.
- The field crews will periodically keep the network and CRMO staff up-dated on their progress and if they need any logistical help.
- Access across adjacent land parcels of various ownership will require coordination throughout the project with John Apel and his staff to insure that field crews are not perceived to be trespassing.
- The point of contact for the field crews will be John Erixson of Northwest Management, Inc. The project points of contact will be Dan Cogan (general) and Lisa Garrett (financial).

The meeting was concluded on Thursday afternoon by collecting data on a sample woodland vegetation plot directed by Gwen Kittel a NatureServe ecologist. During this time the plot procedures were thoroughly reviewed, modifications made to the plot form, cover classes discussed and the sampling scheme was finalized.

Next Steps:

- The field crews will collect data throughout CRMO during the next two months. They will be finalizing the set-up of electronic data collectors, reviewing the data, and sending the preliminary database to UCBN periodically for review.
- Dan Cogan with assistance from UCBN will be providing the crews with field maps showing the Kipukas and containing the UTM coordinates of their centers.
- The CDC will review the existing or legacy data to determine its usefulness. If found to be acceptable, the field crews will be notified about which areas have already been sampled and therefore may require only field reconnaissance to verify the plant associations present.
- The UCBN will be creating a web-site to provide access to all the information related to this project.

On behalf of the UCBN I would like to personally thank everyone for attending this meeting and being active in the discussion. I would also express my appreciation to John and Paige at CRMO for helping to reserve the conference room, providing meeting equipment, coordinating the field trip and contributing to the general success of the meeting. –Dan Cogan
