Announcing *the Release of*

Guidelines for Mapping Vegetation on Army Installations

Introduction

Military land managers require basic vegetation information to maximize the long-term use of mission lands and maintain readiness. The U.S. Army includes vegetation community maps as one of eight required planning-level surveys.

Background

The usual intent of a vegetation map is to inventory plant communities: their location, extent, geographical distribution in the landscape, relationship to other landscape features, and description of selected characteristics. Therefore, a vegetation map is a spatial representation of plants on the landscape, historically presented on paper or Mylar, along with selected features such as roads and streams. The expansion of computer technology has transformed this previously cumbersome package into a stack of overlapping digital data files that store and display an array of individual vegetation characteristics. **A vegetation map is a geographically registered digital database of spatially arranged vegetation information. That information may include data such as species composition, community descriptors, tree diameter, and vegetation height.** Maps can be presented in paper or digital form.

With the growth of computing techniques and advances in remote sensing, modeling, and sampling theory, a vegetation map can now possess a great deal of sophistication. The quality, information content, and flexibility of maps have risen dramatically. Information is no longer available to just a few but can be shared, manipulated, and presented to serve many different clients. Map users include those responsible for mission concerns, land management, vegetation management, fish and wildlife, threatened and endangered species, pest management, cultural resources, public relations, safety and emergency, and planning.

Because maps are so important, satisfaction with the final products is critical. Recognizing the importance, utility, and complexity of maps, the U.S. Army Environmental Center sponsored the development of Guidelines for Mapping Vegetation on Army Installations. The guidelines were prepared using expertise from a variety of organizations and sources, mainly at four of the laboratories in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Research and Development Center.

The Guidelines

These guidelines provide an organized approach to mapping vegetation and were developed for the advanced as well as the inexperienced user. They contain a decision framework for the steps involved in mapping, establishing objectives, identifying available resources, and determining specifications and costs. The decision framework refers to choices on the appropriate approach and methods, and whether to conduct a project using in-house staff, a contractor, or a combination of both.

Other features of these comprehensive guidelines include reference material ranging from regulatory requirements to field data collection to determining map accuracy. Another chapter provides specific guidelines on writing and implementing statements of work including the detailed outline of a statement of work that can be modified for any mapping project. Each of a set of six case studies includes a section on "Lessons Learned" from the project, an illustration of the map that resulted, and excerpts from statements of work. The appendices also contain various templates for use in planning and conducting a mapping project; these were designed to be printed and used by the Project Manager.

The format of the guidelines is designed to help a reader go directly to the information needed. This is done with clear organization and access to each section on its own or with its companions.

These guidelines will have been successful if they help installation land managers better understand the nature of vegetation mapping, how to make cost-effective decisions about the process, how to better manage the overall project, and how to assess project success.

Obtaining a Copy

Guidelines for Mapping Vegetation on Army Installations can be accessed by clicking on the name.

USAEC *United States Army Environmental Center*

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