

# Alaska Geospatial Council

## Vegetation Working Group Charter

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### 1 Background

Vegetation species and communities in Alaska are unique from region to region, and the inventory and monitoring of these resources helps land managers and the general public to conserve plant biodiversity, promote economic development, and ensure natural habitats and processes are maintained over time. Specific uses for vegetation information include but are not limited to:

- Identifying distribution of vegetation types
- Development of Fuel Models for Wildland Fire Management
- Recording Wildlife Corridors & Wildlife Habitat Relationships
- Creation of Topographic Maps
- Establishing baselines for climate change monitoring
- Informing Infrastructure Planning, Economic Development, and Landscape Designs
- Guiding Exotic Species Management

At the State and National levels, multiple agencies and organizations are actively collecting and managing Alaska vegetation resource information. These important baseline activities have proven essential to the understanding and management of vegetation within the state. They have improved awareness of vegetation distribution and composition, and they have shown how natural variation and anthropogenic-driven changes in vegetation directly affect other natural resources in Alaska. Efforts to map and document vegetation have varied in scope and quality. Many efforts are regionally or administratively focused, and many lack coordination and standardized protocols for the collection, description, and distribution of information at a statewide extent.

Collaborative development of a core statewide vegetation framework dataset across multiple agencies and organizations will help facilitate ongoing mapping efforts across the state. Not only will such efforts help improve the quality of statewide vegetation data, it can also reduce inefficient and redundant activities across agencies, and guide more cost effective and justifiable capital expenditures. Collaborative development of a vegetation framework dataset can also ensure vegetation collections meet minimum standards which can result in information that is more widely shared and used, and can be integrated into statewide and national geospatial framework datasets. Supported by the Alaska Geospatial Council, a collaborative effort to develop a statewide vegetation dataset has therefore been initiated, to be facilitated by the AGC Vegetation Technical Working Group (VTWG).

### 2 Purpose

The Vegetation Technical Working Group (VTWG) provides the opportunity for Federal, State, and local agencies, Non-Profits, and Industry across Alaska to come together in a collaborative and cooperative environment to address vegetation inventory and mapping needs for the state of Alaska. The initial purpose of the VTWG will be to evaluate existing standards, classification systems, inventory methods, and management needs in order to provide guidance to public agencies and private industry on recommended approaches for vegetation inventory and mapping.

The ultimate goal of the VTWG will be the development of a comprehensive suite of vegetation inventories and data development approaches that address statewide vegetation data needs from the landscape to the site level using standardized methods consistent with national and state guidance. Additional considerations for future discussion may include: alternative classification systems; integration of vegetation data with other base inventory layers such as the National Landcover Classification Dataset, Landfire, and the U.S. National Vegetation Classification System.

### 3 Objectives

- Identify and advise the AGC on issues related to vegetation theme development and stewardship;
- Coordinate, develop and make recommendations for goals and strategies to improve Alaska's vegetation data;
- Assess, evaluate and adapt current national and state standards for vegetation data classification and create a value added product to meet Alaska's needs;
- Develop, implement and revise stewardship guidance and procedures for vegetation data;
- Serve as a regional voice and advocate for vegetation data in Alaska to the Alaska Geospatial Council and other key advisory groups;
- Develop collaborative funding and data sharing strategies to further vegetation mapping and assessment activities;
- Develop a communication, outreach, and advocacy strategy to facilitate knowledge transfer related to vegetation mapping processes and to track mapping status and opportunities for collaboration.

### 4 Membership

Membership is voluntary and open to all, including all levels of government, utilities, academia and the private sector. The working group will be led by a chair and co-chair with at least one of these positions being occupied by a state agency representative at all times. The chair and co-chair positions will be revisited annually by the working group and changes in responsibility will be endorsed by group consensus. The chair will maintain membership lists and make these lists publicly available on the VTWG website at <http://agc.dnr.alaska.gov>.

Participation in the VTWG does not preclude involvement in AGC-related geospatial procurement, as the group does not vote on Council matters or have fiduciary responsibilities. Procurement matters are separate from this group and will be decided by State government representatives on the Alaska Geospatial Council and conducted through established state procurement procedures.

### 5 Leadership

The Vegetation Technical Working Group Chair will be recommended by the Alaska Geospatial Technical Advisory Group to the Alaska Geospatial Council, who will ratify this Charter and the Chair. The responsibilities of the Chair shall include:

- Manage the membership list;
- Preparation and distribution of a quarterly meeting agenda, including location and time;
- Chair meetings (as defined below) and track decisions;
- Provide executive oversight and leadership for working group activities;
- Report recommendations and provide status updates to the Alaska Geospatial Council;

- Ensure minutes are accurate and publicly available.

In the event the Chair fails to perform these duties over a period of 6 months, the Co-chair will assume lead responsibilities until a new Chair is approved by the Alaska Geospatial Council.

## 6 Meetings

A minimum of four (4) meetings shall be convened each calendar year. Additional meetings may be called at the discretion of the Chair.

## 7 Communication

Written communications will take place via email. A working group page will be maintained on the Department of Natural Resources AGC Website at <http://agc.dnr.alaska.gov>. Postings will include:

- Charter
- Membership
- Meeting minutes
- Data standards and stewardship documents
- Activities calendar
- Other information as determined by the Council.

The working group will review and update website information annually or more frequently as needed.

## 8 Decision Making

Meetings shall be guided by consensus rule of those attending the meeting. Decisions that do not have a consensus may be tabled until the next meeting. A call for consensus may be issued via email to membership; if no objections are raised within 10 working days, consensus will be considered achieved.

The Chair is the final arbiter if consensus cannot be reached in an appropriate amount of time.

## 9 Amendments

Amendments to this charter must be approved by the Alaska Geospatial Council.

## 10 Dissolution

The working group will continue to function as long as it is required by the Alaska Geospatial Council. The Council may dissolve the working group at any time if it is determined to be no longer necessary.

**Alaska Geospatial Council**  
Approval of the Alaska Geospatial  
Vegetation Technical Working Group Charter

*S. Masterman*

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**Steve Masterman, Chair**  
State Geologist  
Department of Natural Resources

Date: 11/8/17