National Plant Data Center

Mission

Providing leadership for the design, development, management, access, and marketing of agency plant information, particularly through the PLANTS Web site. Partnering globally to acquire data and technology for use in conservation practices and automated tools.

Background

The National Plant Data Center (NPDC) was established by the NRCS, Ecological Sciences Division at Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Of the seven NRCS employees, one is located at UC Davis and one at the Montana Plant Materials Center to work closely with collaborators and within their business areas for technology transfer. The Center is collaborating with the USDA ARS Systematic Botany and Mycology Lab (Beltsville, MD) to better integrate and consolidate our activities and resources, reduce any duplication of effort, and better serve the nation. The team primarily focuses on building partnerships and joint efforts aimed toward agency plant information goals. Data management assistance and software development are provided by the NRCS Information Technology Center and USDA National Information Technical Center, Ft. Collins, CO.

Benefits and Accomplishments

- Providing NRCS with one of its three vital strategic databases-PLANTS.
- Coordinating data acquisition to save money and reduce duplication of effort.
- PLANTS Web site provides user-friendly Web access (1.2 million users in 2001).
- Standardized information across disciplines, applications, and agencies to meet local needs and enabling automated data exchange.
- Providing data for conservation planning, technical assistance, plus the NRCS Ecological Site Information System, Grazing Land Administration, VegSpec, National Soils, Field Office Technical Guide, and other tools.
- PLANTS: Many awards, including “Best Fed on the Web” by GovExec.com.
- Serving a key role in the National Invasive Species Council’s Management Plan.
- Providing basic information on the 40,000 plants found in the U.S.
- Documenting and disseminating Native American plant and vegetation management practices for ecosystem-based assistance.
- Developed an alternative vegetable crop module for limited resource farmers.
- Working with the NRCS Plant Materials discipline to provide the field office and client increased access to 500 plant fact sheets and new technology.
- Data used directly by others, such as the USFS Natural Resource Information System, APHIS Plant Protection & Quarantine, & Integrated Taxonomic Information System.
- Cooperating with the Global Invasive Species Programme to provide information on weeds.