NBII Great Basin Information Project

The Great Basin Information Project will provide natural resource information to a wide variety of users and stakeholders.

Background

The National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) <www.nbii.gov> is an electronic information network that provides access to biological data and information on our nation's plants, animals, and ecosystems. Data and information maintained by federal, state, and local government agencies; non-government organizations; and private-sector organizations are linked through the NBII gateway and made accessible to a variety of audiences including researchers, natural resource managers, decision-makers, educators, students, and other private citizens.

Implementation of the NBII is being accomplished through the development of a network of nodes that serve as interconnected entry points to the NBII and the information held by partners. These nodes function as fully digital, distributed, and interactive systems that focus on developing, acquiring, and managing content on a defined subject area (thematic nodes) or a geographic region (regional nodes). The Great Basin Information Project encompasses a geographic area that overlaps three regional nodes: the Southwest Information Node, the Pacific Northwest Information Node, and the California Information Node.

Snake River Cliffs in Idaho, Bureau of Land Management/ photo by Larry Ridenhour

Primary Issues

The goal of the NBII Great Basin Information Project is to provide consolidated and efficient access to information about the Great Basin and Columbia Plateau regions of the Intermountain West (see map below). The unique biodiversity of the Great Basin faces potentially devastating and irreversible change as a result of varying land uses and growth of human populations. A wide variety of stakeholders are involved in managing the region, and some of the realized and potential changes are tied to local or individual decisions without a regional or cumulative understanding of the consequences.

Effective decision-making and management of the natural resources of an area as complex as the Great Basin requires ready access to scientific and educational information so that stakeholders can explore the biological diversity in this region and work together in an informed fashion. The long-term vision is for the Great Basin Information Project to evolve into a nationally and internationally recognized source of information about the Great Basin.

Partnership Opportunities

Two groups currently working to manage and restore biological resources in the Great Basin are the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) and the Bureau of Land Management's team of specialists and managers making up the Great Basin Restoration Initiative (GBRI). The developers and managers for the Great Basin Information Project will team with both WAFWA and GBRI to provide a backbone for the information

Sage grouse, photo by Terry Steele (also the sage grouse in the banner)

Astragalus purshii, photo by David Pyke

resources needed by these groups to facilitate their efforts. Other potential partners include many local, state, and federal agencies, universities, and non-profit organizations.

Products

The NBII Great Basin Information Project will create a Web-accessible gateway to biological information for the Great Basin. The initial focus will be on development of a Web site, a metadata server, a bibliography, and an educational Internet mapper. These four components will serve as the groundwork for an Internet-accessible Great Basin Information Project that will provide immediate benefits to a wide variety of users and stakeholders in the region. When fully implemented, the Project will provide natural resource information for much of Idaho, Oregon, Utah, California, and all of Nevada. The expanded project will be state-of-the-art, designed to serve relevant data and provide for custom analysis tools.

Features:

Web site: The Web site will be designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the Great Basin. This includes a variety of information on natural resources, history, cultures, and resource sharing issues.

Metadata Server: The GBIP will identify geospatial data that is important to the project, determine whether it has correct and/or complete metadata, and determine the best course of action to correct and/or complete incomplete metadata sets. The goal is to create a full-fledged metadata server that can be queried from the Web site. It will include metadata for spatial and biological data that overlay the extent of the Great Basin.

Bibliography: The bibliography will focus on the Great Basin and include papers from scientific journals, theses and dissertations, government publications, and articles from popular magazines and newspapers. Users will be able to search the bibliography for items that match a set of criteria selected by the user.

Educational Internet Mapper: This Internet mapping application is intended for educational use to help visualize the geology, water, vegetation, and other issues in the Great Basin.

Although a prime focus of the NBII is on biological data, the Great Basin Information Project will be strengthened by data on geology, hydrology, geography, and the human dimension. As such, it provides a framework for increased stakeholder interaction. The establishment of the Great Basin Information Project exemplifies the NBII's role as an international leader in the dissemination of scientific information.

More information on the natural resource issues affecting the Great Basin can be found in the 70-page publication *Research Plan for Lands Administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior in the Interior Columbia Basin and Snake River Plateau* (available at <http://greatbasin.nbii.gov>). The report was published in 2002 and written by E. Beever and D. Pyke (USGS/BRD/ITR-2002-0003; U.S. Geological Survey, Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center, Corvallis, OR).

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Find us on the Web at: <http://greatbasin.nbii.gov>.

Sunset in West-Central Nevada, photo by Erik Beever