

The NatureMapping Program

How to get started

by

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Select a group of interested individuals. People who should be contacted are:

Natural resource agency education/outreach coordinators (federal, state and local)

Habitat/Ecosystems managers from natural resource agencies, private and public
wildlife refuges

Extension, soil conservation, state parks

Gap Analysis personnel

Universities:

- A lot of information needs to be disseminated for the public. Contact the Geography, Urban Planning, and Chemistry departments besides the natural resource departments. Gap Analysis personnel may have already have contacts.
- There are programs in some universities that promote undergraduate work in the community.
- There are many graduate students who needs assistance in field studies and are a great resource for the community.

Museums

State Public Education office

State school technical representatives

Conservation groups that conduct field trips or natural resource classes

Interested teachers (usually science teachers to begin with) who are involved in similar projects (Project Wild, Project Wet, GREEN).

The more partners, the less funding and personnel are needed to begin a state program. However, two people should be in charge of the program and have the final say in the process. One person should have the links to the university and agencies, and the other with schools, other educators, environmental education programs, and possibly linked to the university or agencies. Both individuals need not work at the same agency. The co-founders are from the University of Washington and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Contact these people by phone. You can follow up with some flyers. While there is a great deal of enthusiasm for this program, you will find people who are not interested because it may conflict with their agenda, or feel that it will take too much of their time. I have found that there are more people who want to be involved, so I do not spend my time trying to convince anyone who may not be interested.

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Identify what in-kind support and materials can be offered to the teachers and general public volunteers.

- Maps - USGS quads, maps generated by various agencies
- Posters, educational materials
- Workshop sites (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuges education centers, Extension offices and schools are usually free)
- Who wants to take the lead in the workshops? Who wants to help? Who will train the facilitators to take over the workshops? Who will provide them with the materials and pay for their mileage?

Create a pilot project and find a few teachers to beta test the project. It has taken our teachers a couple of years to figure out how to integrate *The NatureMapping* Program into their curriculum. It has taken the agencies the same amount of time to prepare to:

- collect and store data other than the rare, threatened, endangered or game species
- work the public and identify ways that the public can be part of their monitoring projects
- realize that if there are enough partners, individuals will not be overwhelmed by public inquiries, etc.

Try to find out what projects are taking place within their own state that the public is actively involved and build on those programs.

The *NatureMapping* Program web site and software are free to any state who wishes to begin the program. Future modules (water, fish, plants/soils, climate and biodiversity) will be available to participating states. In exchange, a memorandum of understanding/agreement will be signed to guarantee the new state will provide the University of Washington with

- lists of their species codes, habitats and counties
- data collected in their state using *The NatureMapping* Program's fields for consistent reporting nationwide
- acknowledgments to *The NatureMapping* Program in Washington in their materials
- provide contact and web site names and addresses for the national web site, and
- acknowledgment as a partner the national program.

Each state may modify the web site and software for their state, or arrange to have the University of Washington make the modifications for them.

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The University of Washington will house these data for national analyses. However, data should reside within a state for local use. The data repository for each state needs to be identified. (The State Fish and Wildlife agency is the common choice.)

People should be contacted to assist in the editing of these data and to report common errors back to the volunteers. Local Audubon members can help with editing in their areas, since most of the observations will be birds. National Wildlife Refuge, National and State Park and private reserve biologists can edit data collected on their sites before submitted to the state repository.

I have conducted 2 day workshops in new states to acquaint the sponsoring agencies and potential steering committee members with the Program. Each trip last 3-4 days in order to meet with management, small groups and to discuss the uniqueness of each state. Trips are funded by the individual states.