



Appalachian Trail Community: SAIN and the NBII Portal in Action

The NBII Portal AT Community serves as a central point of coordination and collaboration...

Background

The National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) Portal <my.nbii.gov> provides access to biological content and services and helps support the biological research process. Designated groups within the Portal (termed “communities”) address a variety of specialized tasks and are able to experience dynamic interaction with their colleagues.

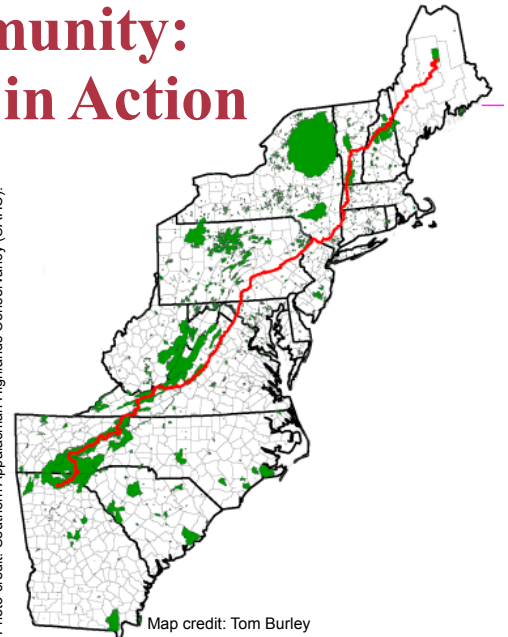
One NBII Portal community, the AT Community <apptail.nbii.gov>, focuses on biodiversity issues of the Appalachian Mountains and, more specifically, the Appalachian Trail (AT). One of the most recognized trails in the world, the AT traverses 14 states, 8 national forests, 5 national park units, and several state forests and parks. Numerous localized natural resource inventory and monitoring (I&M) activities occur along the AT corridor. The NBII Portal AT Community serves as a central point of coordination and collaboration for many of these efforts, such as planning and facilitating a symposium to establish a mega-transect for environmental monitoring along the AT. Positive feedback has been received from trail land managers and others; in fact, AT Community membership has grown to over 312 registered members representing approximately 109



Photo credit: Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC).



Photo credit: Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC).



Map credit: Tom Burley

organizations including federal agencies, universities, non-government organizations (NGOs), state agencies, 1 national lab, and other unaffiliated citizens and private contractors.

Currently, the AT Community is used to post and edit documents, post and track progress of work tasks, conduct discussions on issues, coordinate meta-data documentation for projects, as well as document links of interest for land managers. It also provides a forum dedicated to the identification and utilization of biological data related to resource management and biological

inventory and monitoring. The AT Community will be used to host I&M data and information.

The NBII <www.nbii.gov>, a Web-based system, links diverse, high-quality biological databases, information products, and analytical tools maintained by government agencies, academic institutions, NGOs, and private industry. One NBII component — the NBII Southern Appalachian Information Node (SAIN) <sain.nbii.gov> — provides access to data and information on the biology and ecosystems of the Southern Appalachians and plays a crucial role in supporting AT Community portal activities.

Current AT Projects

The Appalachian Trail MEGA-Transect

One of the primary foci of the AT Community is supporting the Appalachian Trail MEGA-Transect initiative. The goal is “to establish the Appalachian Trail Mega-Transect so that scientists, land managers, and volunteer leaders can effectively manage the Appalachian Trail’s wealth of natural resources and ‘tell the story’ of the environmental health of the Appalachian Mountains to visitors, neighbors, and the

world” (ATC 2007). Understanding the environmental health of the resources along the Trail is critical in providing useful information to decision-makers. More information about the Appalachian Trail MEGA-Transect can be found on the new AT Community public site <sain.nbii.gov/ATMEGATRANSECT> and on the Appalachian Trail Conservancy site <appalachiantrail.org>.

Rare Plant Habitat Management

Data and information management are provided in support of the Adaptive Management of the Roan Mountain Massif. The Roan Mountain Massif is a hotspot of endemic, rare, threatened, and endangered species in the Southern Appalachian Highlands and a region of convergence of northern and southern species. The breadth of information that exists on these and other efforts for the Roan Mountain Massif reflects both the ecological significance of this area and the diversity of agencies, organizations, and individuals working in this landscape. This project addresses a long-standing, critical need to establish an information management system for geo-referenced biological data that support ongoing Roan Mountain Massif management activities and decision-making. A Data Management Toolkit has been developed to support data management issues associated with priority Roan legacy data sets. The Toolkit provides best practices guidance on standardized metadata documentation, data collection, project planning, quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC), and data custodianship.

Information Sharing Between High-Elevation Communities

The purpose of this project is to facilitate communication and collaboration among high-elevation natural resource managers in the Southern Appalachians. Information which can be found in this project includes summary statements on grassy balds, spruce fir forests,

and bolder fields and numerous documents; hotlinks to Web sites; and contact information. Also documented are responses from participating resource managers on topics such as:

1. What are the priority threats to the sustainability of high elevation biological communities?
2. What is the degree of sharing of information that goes on related to adaptive management strategies and



Photo credit: Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC).

their perceived cost and biological effectiveness?

3. Information regarding the current obstacles and needs related to data management, collection, information sharing, as well as potential interest in establishing a collaborative data management strategy.
4. Interest in knowing about this type of information for other high-elevation communities and if they would like to share this information with other resource managers and scientists via a centrally accessible Web tool.

Reference

Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). 2007. “A.T. Mega-Transect Partners: Exploring the Appalachian Trail as an Environmental Mega-Transect.” Available at <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/site/c.jkLXJ8MQKtH/b.2215741/k.99E7/AT_Mega_Transect.htm>, accessed 13 September 2007.

For More Information

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<<http://sain.nbii.gov>>.

