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### Project Datasets

One of the primary objectives of the NPS Inventory and Monitoring Program is to identify key park datasets. With that objective in mind, a few months ago I began identifying GIS datasets that seemed particularly useful for the Appalachian Trail. The Appalachian Trail Park Office and Appalachian Trail Conservancy were the source for many of these datasets, but many are entirely new. Initially I envisioned a collection of maybe 10 to 15 datasets that had broad application but after a few months my list has topped 50 and continues to grow. Each dataset is now in a common projection and follows a consistent naming convention. I haven't forgotten about metadata, but it isn't available for all layers yet.

As with any time consuming task, it is important to balance the investment against the benefit. In this case I think the payoff will be substantial and that prospective projects will benefit from ready to use datasets ranging from trailwide sampling systems to land use to the new watershed based area of interest surrounding the A.T that we call the HUC10 shell.

### Decision Support System

A considerable amount of time has been dedicated to the NASA funded A.T. Decision Support System (DSS) over the last few months. Here are a few highlights:

1. During April we selected ten primary and two supplementary watershed based segments and a series of random sampling points were established within each segment.
2. In May the University of Rhode Island based field crew attended the Northeast Temperate Network forest health training workshop.
3. The field crew began collecting data in June and Brian Mitchell and I joined them on the trail in southern Vermont for their first two days of field work.
4. NASA has furnished an initial set of TOPS datasets. TOPS is a compilation of data and models that will enable the DSS to address many resource management concerns.
5. During June, Glenn Holcomb, USGS, hosted a decision analysis workshop that was designed to encourage the project team to reassess the DSS



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and adjust the project plan accordingly.

The next few months should begin to yield results as many of the individual pieces upon which the DSS is conceived have arrived.

#### **Photo Monitoring**

The photo monitoring methodology we adapted from John Pickle's Picture Post system was tested by a thru-hiker in southern Virginia and is being utilized by the DSS field crew. The results are not yet in, but watching the forest crew implement the system in the field suggests that relatively few changes will be required before implementing the system more broadly.

#### **Acid Deposition Study**

Following a fairly lengthy contracting process, the acid deposition researchers have begun collecting data. Due to the delays, however, implementation is behind schedule.

#### **Phenology**

Our collaboration with the National Phenology Network is continuing and we have made progress on getting the process in place, but implementation is behind schedule due to unforeseen Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) requirements. The National Phenology Network is leading the PRA review and we plan to meet with regional phenology partners later this fall.

#### **Vegetation Mapping**

The Upper Mid-West Environmental Science Center (UMESC) has begun mapping the southern 2/3 of the A.T. using aerial photographs obtained last fall. In addition, they have begun a series of field visits where they will collect data to support their mapping determinations.

This fall the planes will be flying again as we capture the northern 1/3 of trail.

#### **Water Resources**

USGS is entering the final stages of the Level-1 A.T. water resource inventory. In addition to evaluating data along the A.T., USGS has identified a series of "catchments" that are close to the A.T. and characteristic of A.T. resources. We are optimistic that the final product will guide future water resource efforts as we move toward finding opportunities to base our resource assessments on available data and existing programs.

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