

RECOMMENDATION ON OPEN ACCESS TO BIODIVERSITY DATA **(Adopted by GBIF Governing Board on 16.01.06)**

The Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Governing Board -- representing 47 countries, 31 international organizations and the Secretariat on the Convention of Biological Diversity - hereby recommends that research councils, other funding agencies and private foundations:

- **Promote that proposals for funding for biodiversity research include a plan for the maintenance and sharing of the digital biodiversity data generated in proposed projects;**
- **Promote that species and specimen level data and associated metadata that are generated in funded projects are made publicly available through mechanisms cooperating with GBIF, within a specified period after completion of the supported research.**

Rationale:

Many research projects generate biodiversity data sets that are relevant for the wider scientific community, government natural resource managers, policy makers, and the public. Because data sharing now requires small marginal costs compared to the full research costs that generate the data, it is wise to allow for further shared use of these data to benefit the widest possible range of users.

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity has called for more data and information for the effective implementation of its workplans, and the key goals of conservation, sustainable use and the sharing of benefits from the utilization of genetic resources. The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva in December 2003 strongly affirmed the principle of “universal access with equal opportunities for all to scientific knowledge and the creation and dissemination of scientific and technical information.”

Two of the goals of GBIF are to bring together data for multiple uses, and to find incentives and mechanisms to make data freely available as quickly and effectively as possible. These goals underlie the recommendations made here. GBIF’s initial focus is to make available as much data on species and specimens as possible, and to this end it has developed standards and tools. In the coming years, other biodiversity data elements will be built into the GBIF infrastructure. Indeed, GBIF’s ability to build tools and bring together information led the CBD Conference of the Parties to recognize the potential lead role of the GBIF in facilitating its work in the Global Taxonomy Initiative (COP 6) and Inlands Waters (COP 7).

The advantages of free and open data sharing have been documented (Arzberger et al. 2004) and brought together in the collaborative Conservation Commons (www.conservationcommons.org):

- Sharing data is good scientific practice and is necessary for the advancement of science, public awareness and education;
- Expanded access to data sources could impressively increase the value to taxpayers of the more than \$650 billion spent annually by governments on all research disciplines (Science, Technology and Innovation for the 21st

Century. Meeting of the OECD Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy at Ministerial Level, 29-30 January 2004 - Final Communique);

- The openness of science stimulates and facilitates creativity;
- Open access to data enables greater accountability to funding sources as quality, reliability, productivity and use of data are enhanced with public utilization and review.

Requirements for open access to data (e.g. National Institutes of Health, 2003; National Science Foundation 2001) signal the importance of data sharing to science and to decision-making, as well as to the long-term benefits to society and the environment, while respecting the right of scientists to publish on their data before releasing it for use by others.

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