

PACIFIC BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION FORUM FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATION AND MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION

A. PURPOSE

The Pacific Biodiversity Information Forum (PBIF or Forum) represents an effort to create a medium or environment for peoples from the Asia/Oceania region¹ to collaborate on biodiversity science, management and education. It is not intended to replace any existing activity, but to complement current regional activities. It includes both the social (interaction between the various communities) and the technical (information infrastructure) components of a biodiversity information system. To that end, cooperators from the region are working together to build a distributed information system that serves as a vehicle for enabling data and information sharing within the region and further distribution of the information to the broader global biodiversity science and conservation community.

In 2003 and 2004, collaborators met to consider the need for this entity, and to define its organizational and operating components. This document conveys the framework that has emerged from these efforts.

B. BACKGROUND

Biodiversity is particularly important to many in the region who are dependant upon the sustainability of the scarce natural resources typical of many nations in the region. Conservation activities stem from concern over the potential loss of culturally or economically important species and/or whole ecosystems. Some of the most immediate threats include impacts of invasive species, climate change, and land use. To mitigate or combat these impacts requires wide-ranging efforts including quarantine and biosecurity controls as well as programs for sustainable development.

These concerns highlight the need to provide access to good scientific information that is accurate, easy to find and targeted to specific needs of people in the region. This can be accomplished most efficiently and effectively by linking to or developing appropriate region-based informatics activities (data and analytical capabilities and computer capacity and Internet access, etc.). Such a system would support: 1) government needs by linking biodiversity information to the policy formulation and legislative processes; 2) promote scientific advancement in the region by providing an information resource for scientists, and aid in building scientific capacity; and 3) improve local conservation efforts by providing a venue for communities to access scientific information and expertise.

C. VISION

The Vision for the Forum is *“informed decision-making in the Pacific supported by the improved generation and usefulness of biodiversity information resources from the Pacific region.”*

D. OPERATING VALUES

The Forum implements the following values as a part of its operations:

¹ The region include in PBIF includes the United Nations defined areas of Eastern Asia, Southeastern Asia and Oceania (including the United States and the Economy of Taiwan).

- Openness – Information, data and services provided through PBIF are freely available to all through the world-wide-web. These same services may be offered via other mechanisms to meet the needs of customers as resources allow.
- Transparency and Active Data Dissemination – PBIF conducts all business activities through a visible process to ensure that all participants have a clear understanding of the Forum’s business practices, content and contributors. That is to say that the processes used to acquire, manage and serve the data are to be clear to contributors and users. Furthermore, the Forum proactively distributes data to ensure timely dissemination.
- Quality control, Data validation and Authentication – Data and information accessible through PBIF include safeguards to ensure that data sets meet a minimum of quality based upon standard scientific practices and credibility of the data source(s). Technical validation and authentication procedures are also implemented to ensure data integrity.
- Management Accountability and Funding – Management controls are applied at all levels of operation. These controls are based upon best business practices to ensure effective operations and accountability of resources received by PBIF.
- Assignment and Assumption of Formal Responsibilities – PBIF operates in accordance with the organizational structure defined below (section E).
- Legal and Cultural Responsibility- All information services and products are created and managed with respect for intellectual property laws and customs of the respective data owners.
- Efficiency and Flexibility – Business procedures are established to maximize efficiency and productivity but are open to revision to allow flexibility to respond to needs of users.
- Technical and Semantic Interoperability of Databases – By assuring that databases are interoperable, PBIF supports integration and sharing of data and information from a variety of distributed resources.

E. GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

PBIF is structured as a federation of organizations and people sharing a vision to make biodiversity data, tools and expertise freely available using technologies appropriate to the region. Any scientifically credible organization, consortium, project or individual may become a member of PBIF (see section G.). PBIF members agree to implement and promote standards and interoperability consistent with those accepted and being applied by other environmental data systems around the world. PBIF is hosted by the Pacific Science Association and is not entity unto itself nor does it own any data, equipment or retain staff. It is the sum total of organizations involved in its development and operations that agree to accept the responsibilities of membership. PBIF is managed by an Organizing Committee elected from its membership and convened by a representative from the Pacific Science Association. It seeks advice through *ad hoc* working groups made up of PBIF members and other technical experts appointed by the Organizing Committee. Operations will be done through collaborators serving as Primary Data Providers or as the regional PBIF Gateway.

F. OPERATIONS

PBIF was established to address the following Mission: *“PBIF seeks to develop a complete, scientifically sound, and electronically accessible regional biodiversity knowledge base and make it widely available to local, national, regional and global users.”* To accomplish this mission the Forum will pursue a strategy that first links to existing data and information; and then sequentially develops bibliographies or catalogs of information key sources; and promotes

development of new content (data, information, informatics tools or capacity) for the Forum and the region.

The Forum is accomplished through collaboration between the PBIF Gateway and Primary Data Providers. The Gateway, hosted by the Pacific Science Association, represents the perspective and needs of the region as a whole. It functions at the regional level to provide for centralized organization, collaboration and integration of operational activities. Primary Data Providers may be established by any PBIF member that demonstrates a commitment to collaborate on PBIF endeavors and has the capacity to act as information clearinghouse for their unique customers or products. The Providers offer local or sub-regional information and services and collaborate with the Gateway to create integrated regional products. These two elements work together to aggregate information and services from local to regional and finally global levels providing both content and capacity for the PBIF.

There is no hierarchical relationship implied within the PBIF operating elements, the Gateway and Primary Data Providers are equal representatives meant to serve specific needs of the Forum.

G. FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

This document does not constitute a financial commitment on the part of any of the members. Securing funding for operations or specific projects is an integral function of the Forum members. Financial support will be provided either by members as in-kind or voluntary contributions to the Forum for specific activities and will be determined as part of the planning process. Base operations will be funded through in-kind contributions of external funding sources as identified and secured by Forum members. Separate documentation and procedures as required by the funding organization for allocating funds, and by the funds manager for distributing funds, will be followed as appropriate.

H. MEMBERSHIP

Membership must be approved by the Organizing Committee. The organizing committee will use the table below as one input into the review of candidate Primary Data Providers.

Criteria for Participation in PBIF	Importance
Willingness to accept PBIF Rules of Procedure and sign an agreement with PBIF	Hi
Initiatives that could help create the PBIF infrastructure (national, regional, international)	Med
Initiatives that could provide relevant content, including original data providers such as museum consortia, etc.	Hi
Advance PBIF objectives	Hi
Advance cooperator objectives	Med
Provide open access to information	Hi
Models and initiatives to assist with the specific issues that arise during the development of the network	Med
Provide metadata in the public domain	Low

I. Amendments and Revision

This memorandum will be subject to revision and can be amended, extended, or modified by the mutual written consent of the participating signatories. If the modification relates to the withdrawal of a consortium member, one month's (30 days) notice in writing to the membership is required. Such withdrawal does not negate any contractual obligations of that member to ongoing Forum projects.

J. Initiation and Termination

The memorandum will become effective upon the signature of appropriate representatives from all participating institutions. The agreement will remain in effect until terminated by mutual agreement of the current participants.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Title

Institution

ANNEX I

ASIA/OCEANIA REGION ACCORDING TO THE UNITED NATIONS*

ASIA

Eastern Asia

China,
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China,
Macao Special Administrative Region of China
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Japan
Mongolia
Republic of Korea

Southeastern Asia

Brunei Darussalam
Cambodia
Indonesia
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Malaysia
Myanmar
Philippines
Singapore
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Viet Nam

OCEANIA

Australia and New Zealand

Australia
New Zealand
Norfolk Island

Melanesia

Fiji
New Caledonia
Papua New Guinea
Solomon Islands
Vanuatu

Micronesia

Guam
Kiribati
Marshall Islands
Micronesia (Federated States of)
Nauru
Northern Mariana Islands
Palau

Polynesia

American Samoa
Cook Islands
French Polynesia
Niue
Pitcairn
Samoa
Tokelau
Tonga
Tuvalu
Wallis and Futuna Islands

*The following country and economy are included due to the importance of continuity of fauna and flora the United States of America (the state of Hawaii and US affiliated pacific island territories) and Province of Taiwan.