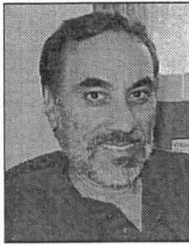


Developing Tools to Sustain Biological Diversity

BY RANDY MOLINA

The Biodiversity Initiative strives to provide innovative solutions to the complex problem of managing forests for biodiversity. Although this initiative is in its beginning stages, an initial scoping meeting has already taken place and planning for the next steps is underway. The initiative is developing plans to conduct extensive scoping efforts in the management, agency and private sectors, and to deliver usable products through publications, workshops and meetings. The Biodiversity Initiative will focus most of its efforts in Oregon and Washington.



Defining biodiversity

To many, the term "biodiversity" represents positive values of land stewardship in providing for all species and the important processes they perform in resilient ecosystems. To others, biodiversity can carry negative connotations. When thinking about biodiversity, many people tend to think of controversial topics such as old-growth forests, spotted owls and the genetic diversity of salmon in the Pacific Northwest. The act of conserving biodiversity in forest management, particularly for threatened species, has indeed been a major divisive factor in deciding how best to manage forest ecosystems for multiple values.

The Society of American Foresters' *Dictionary of Forestry* defines biodiversity as "the variety and abundance of life forms, processes, functions and structures of plants, animals and other living organisms, including the relative complexity of species, communities, gene pools and ecosystems at spatial scales that range from local through regional to global." In this context, the Biodiversity Initiative seeks to address the challenges in managing forests for biodiversity and develop science-based tools to meet those challenges.

Issues to address

The first task of the initiative is to

contact different stakeholder groups and identify and understand what their most important needs are so that we can prioritize our efforts. Stakeholder groups will range from state and federal agencies to private forestry companies and environmental groups. Much of the initial scoping will focus on one-on-one interviews with practitioners as well as leaders of key agencies and organizations. We also plan to conduct interactive workshops with diverse clients so that we can use opportunities for mutual learning to develop priorities for the initiative. The scoping process will also allow us to build partnerships and develop a framework for getting products to people who can use them.

Scoping efforts include:

- Interactive workshops with a broad array of stakeholders who will discuss their unique biodiversity management issues and thus help to define the scope of the initiative and the types of products needed.
- Structured, one-on-one interviews as well as web-based surveys with agency practitioners to reveal priority issues in managing for biodiversity.
- A workshop in February 2005 at the joint meeting of the Northwest chapters of the Wildlife Society and Vertebrate Biology Society that will provide an excellent opportunity to interact on biodiversity management issues with over a hundred regional biologists, managers, and members of the environmental community.

Scoping efforts for the Biodiversity Initiative are currently being coordinated with universities and outside agencies and scheduled for completion by March of 2005.

Anticipated products

Written products will range from short, topic-specific fact sheets to detailed syntheses on broad biodiversity management issues. Presentations in workshops and conferences can offer opportunities to showcase and discuss a range of approaches to conserve biodiversity as part of the evolving paradigm of ecosystem management. Finally, we anticipate field trips where managers, researchers and the public can get first-

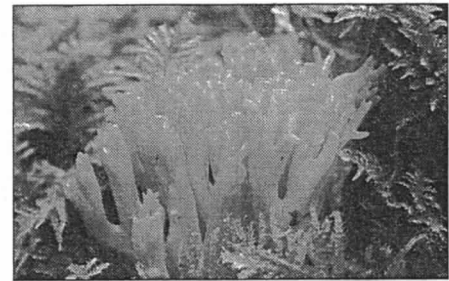


PHOTO COURTESY OF DAN POWELL

Shown is the fruiting body of the coral fungus, a mycorrhizal fungus with several conifer tree species. This rare fungus represents a number of poorly known, yet ecological important taxa that contribute to the healthy functioning of forest ecosystems.

hand views of a variety of management approaches, discuss effects and outcomes of the approaches, and thereby work toward consensus in managing our forests for multiple values.

Products from the Biodiversity Initiative may include:

- Regional workshops that will provide land managers tools and insights on how to manage for biodiversity.
- A national symposium that will bring together people from agencies, private landowners, representatives from nongovernment organizations, and other stakeholders.
- Publications that synthesize existing information and current needs regarding biodiversity, including professional journals, fact sheets and general technical reports published through the PNW Station.

With the Biodiversity Initiative we hope to transcend the image of biodiversity as mere controversy in the newspapers and bitter disputes in the courtroom. Rather, we operate under the assumption that biodiversity is a natural and cultural asset. By incorporating the viewpoints of diverse clients and framing the issues into management concerns, the Biodiversity Initiative supports informed natural resource management for the long-term sustainability of diverse resources. ♦

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