



# Biological Information Needs in the Southern Appalachians: Preliminary Results from a Survey of Researchers



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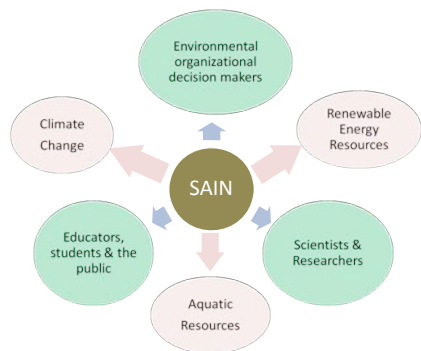
Increasing Biological Information Sources: Technical Assistance and Support for Delivery and Technology Transfer. Support provided by Jean Freeney and the USGS National Biological Information Infrastructure, Southern Appalachian Information Node

## Research Question:

*How to best make Southern Appalachian biodiversity information available for research, decision making and education?*



**Southern Appalachian Information Node (SAIN)**  
Your Gateway to Regional Biodiversity Information



## Internet Survey:

- All faculty in life and agricultural sciences (and some in physical, technical and social sciences).
- All major universities in SAIN region.
- Attendees from related regional conferences.
- SAIN identified partners and stakeholders.
- *Non-profits, collections and herbaria forthcoming.*
- 339 Responses as of 11/4/10

## 1. What information is needed?

**60% say Half or More Than Half of the information they need to do their work relates specifically to biodiversity.**

**31% say this information is Difficult or Very Difficult to Find.**

Type	... is HALF or MORE THAN HALF of biod. info needed to do work.	... is DIFFICULT or VERY DIFFICULT to find.
Raw data	63%	40%
Models*	53%	35%
Summarized data	35%	36%

Tools	% Important or Essential	% Not At All Important
Information Search	86	.6
Mapping	77	4
Data Management	64	6
Visualization	58	8
Metadata	42	7
Decision Support	33	12

SAIN Topic Area	% Respondents for whom SAIN Topic is Focus of Work or Complete Focus of Work
Aquatic Resources	31
Climate Change	20
Bio-Energy	12

## 2. What information sources are currently used and why?

Information Source	% Who Regularly Consult
USDA	48
State Environmental / Wildlife Resources Agencies	45
NOAA Climate Services	33
NRCS	26
NatureServe	25
NBII	21
NOAA NCDC	20
US LTER	18

Information Source Attributes	% Important or Essential
Trusted Source	96
Well Documented (Provenance)	89
Completeness	86
Appropriate Scale	86
Currency	83
Navigation	80
Easy to Use	78

## 3. What are the barriers to finding biodiversity info?

Issue with "Information I Need"	% Agree or Strongly Agree
Knowing where to find is a challenge	55
Best way to find is to ask a colleague	50
Finding information is difficult	45
Finding information takes too long	41
Information is not available	34

Most Limited By . . .	Percent
Lack of appropriate information	37
Time	29
Not knowing where to look	28
Lack of available information	26
Not being able to access info. avail.	25
Not knowing how to find what is needed	22

## Conclusions & Implications:

1. *Biodiversity gateways are needed.*
  - Biodiversity related work is the major portion of work for more than half of respondents.
2. *To be useful, biodiversity information must meet high standards.*
  - ~ 80% say information must be trusted, complete, well documented, at the appropriate scale, current, easy to use and easy to find.
  - 22% regularly consult the NBII.
3. *Finding biodiversity information is difficult.*
  - Information search tools are the most important tools to these respondents.
  - More than half agree "Knowing where to find the information I need is a challenge."
4. *Time is a significant barrier to finding needed information.*
  - 41% say finding information "I need" takes too long.
  - 29% are MOST limited by time in finding the information they need.
5. *The information needed can't be found.*
  - 37% MOST limited by a lack of appropriate information.

***Biodiversity gateways must provide needed information quickly and easily.***