



Northwest Environmental Data Network Portal Channels and Data Steward Roles and Responsibilities¹

Version 4 (July 2006)

1.0 Data Channels and Data Steward Roles

The objective of the NED Portal program is to direct scientific and resource management users of data to a consistent source of environmental geospatial and tabular data with related metadata.

To achieve this objective, NED has established a data Portal that is intended to function as a significant source of regional data and related metadata and operate as a harvestable data resource for the National Geospatial One-Stop system at GeoData.gov.

The Portal's "Data Categories" will be designed around the

¹ This document is closely based on the Geospatial One-Stop Channel Steward Handbook September 2004 Version 1.0

International Organizations for Standards Metadata Standard (ISO 19115) Topic Categories . These categories will be developed further as necessary to deal with particular topical or directory needs of Northwest users.

The term ‘Channels’ will be used to refer to both the Portal’s Data Categories and multi-theme featured activities. Both are structured and managed similarly within the Portal. The channel concept provides both a high level structure for data organization and an opportunity to involve Channel Stewards. Channel Stewards have particular or detailed knowledge of the data sharing and exchange needs of particular user communities.

Their job is to develop a community of interest around relevant data sets. A Northwest example, of a community of interest, are individuals concerned with locating all web-enabled data relating to the monitoring and evaluation of the success of Salmonid recovery projects. Other communities of interest will include users and providers of water quality and wildlife habitat information.

While Channel Stewards are not tasked to create metadata records or to ensure the quality of the data described by the metadata, they have a role in ensuring that metadata records are sufficiently complete to allow the data to be accessed and understood once it is posted. For this reason data documents for publishing must include FGDC compliant metadata records.

Channel Stewards have an additional important role in locating data sets that are of interest to the channels that they are supporting and working to facilitate the publication of that data. Facilitation could involve outreach to other data centers where the data is physically located or direct contact with existing data collectors.

The Channel Steward will function as a leader within their data or application community who can assess available metadata records within the NED Portal, then select and feature those data sets that are of most interest to Portal users.

1.1. Channel Steward Selection

Channel Stewards will be recruited on the basis of their knowledge within the thematic community and their ability to coordinate a community of users and data providers.

1.2. Channel Steward Roles and Responsibilities

The primary role of the Channel Steward is to compile and manage the content of Channels on the NED Portal site. More specifically, the Channel Steward’s role includes:

- Complying with the Northwest Environmental Data Network (NED) Portal Data Sharing Agreement
- Customizing the content of the Channel page(s)

- General maintenance and update of the Channel content.
- Creating and fostering a Channel Community.
- Helping to support the harvesting of NED Data by GOS.

It is the responsibility of the Channel Steward to ensure that data resources featured within the channel offer value to the community and have been researched sufficiently to justify featuring. The Channel Steward will providing leadership to the Channel community and monitor updated and new data resources submitted to the NED Portal so that resources of value are featured appropriately and channel content remains current.

1.3. Channel Steward Authority

To fulfill these responsibilities the Channel Steward is empowered with specific operational authorities. While the Channel Steward may choose to solicit input from the Channel Community, the Steward serves as the final authority on:

- Features, datasets, or other content that appear in the channel for which the Steward is responsible
- Selection of a team of Channel Contributors to function in an advisory role for the channel.
- Establishing sub-channels and selecting a team of Sub-Channel Managers to report directly to the Channel Steward.

The Channel Steward can utilize administration tools within the NED Portal to manage the channel operational capabilities of Channel Contributors and Sub-Channel Managers.

A login feature within the NED Portal enables the selected Contributors and Sub-channel managers to register so that they may be authorized with these authorities.

1.4. Channel Steward Assessment

Channel performance will primarily be assessed by the success of the channel.

Successful channels are those with:

- Active Channel Communities
- Frequent access and data downloads
- Frequent changes in the featured products for event-driven channels
- Strong variety of content type (data, events, funding opportunities, etc.)
- Content that represents the full spectrum of the Channel Community
- Content that is current and accurate
- Positive user feedback.

It is expected that feedback comments and general web-monitoring statistics will also provide some indication of both successful Channels and Channels with performance problems. Channel Stewards will be provided technical assistance and guidance.

1.5. Layout of a Typical Channel

There are three general types of features within a channel that the Channel Steward can control a) Navigation links b) data resource featured content within the Channel homepage, and c) sub-channels featured within the Channel homepage.

The Channel Steward is free to ‘personalize’ the channel content to best reflect the interest of the Channel Community within the constraints of the NED Portal Channel Template.

The Portal Template is expected to have the following:

a. Channel Navigation Links

The upper left corner of each channel “home page” has 14 navigation links. Three are mandatory and form the core navigation links common to all channels.

The mandatory links are:

- Live Data and Maps - resources selected by the Channel Steward, Channel Contributors, and/or Channel Community as of special interest or value
- About this Channel - description of the channel and examples of data topics addressed by the Channel
- Help - links to ‘Data Category and Topics Page Help’

There are 11 additional links that are optional:

- Downloadable Data
- Applications
- Other Resources
- Standards (available information on related geospatial or thematic standards)
- Market-Place and Partnerships
- Grants and Funding
- Events/Hot topics/News
- Models and Advanced Applications
- Websites of Interest
- Tools
- Best Practices

Portal channel tools for managing content within these navigation links are provided to the Channel Stewards. These tools are web-enabled databases that give the Steward the ability to populate, order, and otherwise control the content, function, and appearance of the content within the navigation links. The tools are password controlled so that the Steward (or backup) and/or Sub-Channel Managers can have exclusive access.

b. Channel Featured Content

The heart of each channel home page is the central area where data resources are featured. The Channel Steward can manage the content of this feature area using a password controlled suite of web-based screens to complete:

i. Actions that are done once or on rare occasions:

- Create additional topic headings within the predefined channels to help organize the information within a section (e.g. if there are a lot of websites referenced in the ‘Websites of Interest’ section they can be organized under headings such as: Federal Websites, Organization Websites, State Websites, etc.)
- Create sub-channels as needed
- Create a short introductory description about the channel or sub-channel
- List the keywords that describe the channel or sub-channel
- Create a long description about the channel or sub-channel

ii. Actions that are done routinely:

- Identify existing metadata records within the portal to be featured in the channel
- Add data or information not in the portal by entering a textual description and optional URL
- Arrange and sequence the selected records and information into the predefined channel links (section) described above

In addition, the Channel Steward can use the administrative tools to assign/unassign nomination privileges to Channel Contributors allowing them to nominate existing metadata records from the Portal holdings for consideration for featuring on the channel. Email and other tools should be used as needed to vote on nominated resources, and to do other peer collaboration functions necessary for sustaining a successful channel peer community.

c. Sub-Channels

Channel stewards can create a set of sub-channels to further organize channel content and distribute channel management. This feature is most beneficial to those Channels with broad subject matter that represents multiple professional interests.

If the Channel Steward determines that sub-channels are needed to support the Channel Community, the Steward utilizes portal channel tools to establish and entitle the sub-channels and to assign management rights to a Sub-Channel Steward.

Once assigned, the Sub-Channel Steward has access to the full suite of the NED Portal channel management tools and can customize the featured content of the Sub-Channel site. The Channel Steward is responsible for managing and supporting Sub-Channel Stewards by establishing communication with and among the Sub-Channel Stewards and

for setting basic management procedures for Sub-Channel featured content selection and sub-channel content review and maintenance.

1.6. Strategies for Building Channel Content

NED Channels can serve as a cooperative marketplace for the exchange of data and information including, but not limited to, the following data resources

- Live maps and applications
- Available data resources such as downloadable data, map images, offline data, etc.
- Planned data acquisitions and partnership opportunities
- Information resources
- About this page
- Models and advanced applications
- Standards
- Websites of interest
- Tools such as metadata creation tools, theme relevant analysis tools, and other data tools of interest to the channel's community of users
- Publications such as newsletters, research studies, and best practices
- Grants and funding
- Meetings and events
- News.

The Portal Catalog is populated with metadata in any of three ways (in order of preference):

- Automated harvesting of existing geospatial metadata records from registered collections/clearinghouses
- Upload, by external participants, of their existing metadata to the NED Portal
- Manual creation, by external participants, of metadata using the NED Portal metadata publication tool.

All of the metadata within the NED Catalog can be browsed, searched, and selected as resources of special value to be 'featured' within the Channel. It is the responsibility of the Channel Steward to develop the strategy that works best for the Channel Community.

The following strategies for Portal population are suggested for initial consideration and may be implemented singularly or in a staged approach. However, Channel Stewards are strongly encouraged to generate individual strategies that best utilize and serve the Channel Community.

Suggested options include:

- Channel Steward actively solicits the entire channel community to nominate content using the Administration tools provided

- Channel Steward initiates an independent effort to review the NED Portal metadata collection and select content.

1.7. Criteria for Adding Featured Resources

Each channel in the NED Portal represents a user community with potentially unique data requirements. It is up to the Channel Steward to determine the criteria for selecting data to feature within the channel. At a minimum, all data resources featured within a channel must:

a. Have metadata that describes the resource as follows:

- FGDC compliant metadata registered in the NED Catalog, or
- If the metadata is not registered or not appropriate to be registered (a web site of interest with no geospatial data), the Channel Steward can enter a textual description and a URL using the “External Link” channel tool, or
- If the data resource metadata needs to be added due to an emergency or time critical event, contact the data owner to have them to enter the metadata or to request approval for the Channel Steward to enter the metadata using his/her regular NED Portal publishing account until the new data resource’s owner has registered as a NED Portal publisher. Once the owner registers, then the metadata record can be transferred to their account.

b. Be of known/stated reliable quality, preferably with a reliability statement included in the metadata associated with the data set.

There is no minimum quality required, but the quality of the resource must be understood by all who use the information for making business decisions based upon them. The Channel Steward may decide to use additional criteria for featuring data resources in the channel. These might include elements of uniqueness, interactive capabilities, or respectability in terms of being considered the quintessential resource for that particular geospatial information.

One of the goals of the channels is to provide “two clicks to content” access to what the community has identified as the best content for the category or cross-cutting application/event. Regardless of the criteria, it must be formalized so that Channel Contributors as well as end users understand why certain data are featured, while others are not. It is anticipated that there might be commercial or political pressures put on the Channel Steward to feature data resources. A clear set of documented criteria will enable the Steward to make decisions that are reasonable and fair.

1.8. Channel Review and Update

Channel Stewards are expected to regularly review the Channel to ensure that all content is:

- Applicable to the channel
- Current (especially event notices)
- Operational (especially URLs)
- Complete.

In addition, Channel Stewards are encouraged to regularly update the featured content. While some resources are considered ‘gold standards’ that users will expect to always find among the featured content, the Channel Steward is encouraged to seek content that may be of special interest due to its timeliness (event or season), innovative nature, or unique character. Special interest resources should change on a regular basis to keep the content fresh and encourage frequent visits by the Channel community.

1.9. Creating and Fostering Channel Communities

Channel Stewards are encouraged to establish a core team of Channel Contributors to aid in the development of the Channel and the selection of featured content. Channel Contributor teams should be of a manageable size (6-12 members) and include individuals that represent the scope of the Channel topic areas and diverse organizational types. The Channel Steward is encouraged to compile and circulate contact information for all Channel Contributors, establish a regular meeting schedule for the Channel Contributors, and to generate objectives and tasks for the Channel Contributor team.

Once established, the Channel Contributors should perform outreach to encourage participation in the NED Portal by others in the professional community. If there is strong interest in the Channel, the Channel Contributors should consider engaging the Channel Community in numerous activities including:

- Publish information about their own Channel related data and information resources
 - Nominate content to be featured within the Channel
 - Report expired content, non-operational URLs, and publishing problems.
- Suggested methods for outreach to the Channel Community include:
- Professional listservers
 - Direct contact with peers
 - Presentations at conferences and events
 - Promotion of the Channel Managers role as a NED Channel Steward in your own organizational outreach materials and web-sites.