First IABIN Council Meeting Project Summary:

HARMONIZING METADATA INITIATIVES THROUGHOUT IABIN

Project Leader: Vincent Abreu, University of Michigan

The work proposed consists of three main objectives: (1) preparation of a survey of metadata standards, protocols and tools in the Americas; (2) development of a biodiversity catalog for Central America; and (3) development of guidelines and recommendations on metadata standards, protocols and tools for IABIN.

I.   **Project Components and Products**

1.   **Survey of metadata standards, protocol and tools being used throughout the Americas.**

Development of metadata and information systems is being conducted in various countries of the Americas and key organizations dealing with biodiversity data worldwide. Identification of existing metadata standards, formats and tools is first needed. Only then can informed recommendations and guidelines be issued for the IABIN network.

This component will consist of the following:

- Identification of key existing biodiversity information systems worldwide (BCIS; NABIN, etc.) and analysis of metadata types and formats used.
- Compilation and analysis of collected information.
- Preparation of a report outlining the results of the survey.

This component will be carried out during the first three months of the project.

2.   **Development of a prototype distributed catalog system for biodiversity data and information in Central America.**

The World Bank's InfoDev Program has provided funds for development of an environmental information system in Central America. This distributed catalog system is being installed in seven Central American

countries and provides an infrastructure that will be utilized to support of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.

This second component expands on the InfoDev project and aims to demonstrate a prototype of a distributed catalog system on biodiversity for Central America. It will include:

- Develop metadata for biodiversity and related information, in order to obtain the critical number of entries that are needed so the catalog be useful.
- Develop a search and retrieval interface for biodiversity data, which will be accessible through institutional home pages.
- Preparation of a report outlining an analysis of results and experiences with the prototype development.

3. **Start an evaluation process of existing metadata standards, protocols and tools by a group of experts and begin the preparation of metadata guidelines and recommendations for IABIN.**

To facilitate exchange of information among network users and providers of data, guidelines and recommendations on standards, protocols and formats need to be promoted among IABIN participants. This is an issue that needs to be addressed as early as possible in the development of IABIN.

- Identification of a group of experts by the IABIN Interim Steering Committee (or replacement) on metadata standards that will comprise a Metadata Experts Committee for this project. A meeting of these experts will be organized in order to carry out:
    1. The evaluation of metadata standards, protocols and tools from findings of survey report and prototype development.
    2. Begin preparation of a report on guidelines and recommendations for metadta standards, protocols and tools promoted by IABIN.

    The guidelines should include information about what metadata standards, protocols and tools can facilitate the exchange of information among network participants and recommendations should suggest how existing standards, protocols and tools may be modified to better satisfy the needs of users and data providers.

II.   **Status Report**

1. Hired personnel in Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Mexico;
2. Carried out training in Mexico for the staff in Honduras and El Salvador;
3. Set-up servers in the Central American countries to prototype a distributed regional catalog system;
4. Identified and documented hundreds of databases to be included in the catalog; and
5. Began a survey of standards and protocols being used by institutions in Latin America that are setting up catalog systems.