GRID
GLOBAL RESOURCE INFORMATION DATABASE

GRID

INFORMATION SERIES

NO. 17

NAIROBI

OCTOBER 1990

GRID DATA DISTRIBUTION POLICY

GEMS
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT MONITORING SYSTEM
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

GRID INFORMATION SERIES

GRID
GLOBAL RESOURCE INFORMATION DATABASE

GRID
INFORMATION SERIES
NO. 17

NAIROBI
OCTOBER 1990

GRID DATA DISTRIBUTION POLICY

GEMS
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT MONITORING SYSTEM
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

1. BACKGROUND

GRID, the Global Resource Information Database, is an environmental data management service within the United Nations system, established in 1985 and managed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as part of the Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS). It is an international co-operative effort involving UN Specialized Agencies, intergovernmental organizations and national governments.

GRID has four main data management functions: to bring together key global and regional environmental data sets produced as a result of inventory and monitoring activities both within and outside GEMS, to integrate such data sets through geographical referencing and defined functional linkages, to establish an analytical basis for assessment statements on selected key environmental issues, and, in general, to convert environmental data into integrated information usable by both national and international decision-makers and scientists anywhere in the world. GRID also aims to provide access to a unique international GIS service.

During its initial years, GRID has tested the application of geographical information system (GIS) technology in the international context at scales ranging from global to sub-national. An archive of data sets has also been established. This GRID Data Release Policy statement describes the types of data which have been collected, the archive and the guidelines for release of the data. (For further information on the GRID system, please see the GRID Brochure and other reports in the GRID Information Series).

2. THE GRID ARCHIVE

2.1 Types of Data

The GRID archive contains a variety of data sets relevant to the health of the planet. The data sets come from a number of sources and at a number of scales. The majority of the data sets, however, concern global or regional themes, although a number of national data sets are also included. All of the data sets have the common characteristic of being geographically referenced.

The GRID datasets can be classified into the following general categories:

A. Global and Regional Data sets from UN or Intergovernmental Sources: These are "public domain" data sets which have been released by a UN organisation or an intergovernmental organisation such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA), etc., either as maps, atlases, books or in other published form, or which are available as digital data. Examples are the FAO Soils Map of the world and the Conservation Monitoring Centre Databases of Threatened Plant and Animal Species.

B. Global and Regional Data sets from National Organisations:
These data sets have been developed within national agencies,
typically for analysis of global processes or as an aid to
international communication. Examples are the US Navy Global
Spot Elevation Data set and the NOAA Weekly Global Vegetation
Index. For most practical purposes they are "public domain".

C. National Data sets from International Development
Activities: Obtained from the same sources as type A data,
these data are limited in scope to one country or a part
thereof. They have been generated through the activities of an
internationally financed development project, and are generally
considered by the country in question to be suitable for
circulation to users outside that country.

D. National Data sets from National Organisations: National or
sub-national data sets arising out of a national organisation
project activity, often generated from GRID supported case
studies. Such data sets are usually privileged by the terms of
the case study agreement. Most national and sub-national data
sets in this category may only be released with the expressed
permission of the relevant authority. Spatially resampled
(generalised) versions of the data may be used to update other
GRID data sets.

E. Data sets from private organisations: Such data sets have
been produced by profit-making organisations, either for
internal use or for public sale. These reside in the GRID
archive by arrangement and are only for in-house use. Many are
processed satellite data sets sold by private vendors. GRID
does not distribute raw (unprocessed) satellite data.

2.2 Archive Maintenance

The GRID Archive is operated in a distributed fashion with each
regional GRID node responsible for certain data sets. Global data
sets are maintained at GRID-Geneva. In general, the division is
along geographical lines, with the Africa data sets, for instance,
maintained in Nairobi. Cooperative centres are being established,
for example, in Bangkok (South East Asia), Noumea (the Pacific),
Mexico City (Latin America and the Caribbean). The first centre in
the Nordic region has been opened in Arendal, Norway and a North
American centre in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, USA. Some GRID nodes
also have specific sectoral responsibilities.

As more up-to-date information is received, the relevant data
sets are modified and the changes incorporated into the archive at
the responsible node. All nodes report any such updates to the GRID
Coordinator on a regular basis.

2.3 The GRID Data Set Bulletins

On the basis of the information received from the various GRID
nodes, a detailed listing of the current GRID data sets is issued on
a regular basis from Nairobi. The following information about each
data set is available:

A. DATA SET IDENTITY CODE.

B. GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: Global, Continental, Regional, National, Sub-national or Specific Area.

C. SOURCE (including originators, and originating unit or organization).

D. DATE: indicating the date of publication, generation, or date range covered by the data set.

E. FORMAT: Indicating the data structure. Data sets are normally archived in either vector or raster format.

F. MAP PROJECTION & COORDINATE SYSTEM.

G. SCALE OR SPATIAL RESOLUTION, as appropriate.

H. AVAILABILITY: Following the guidelines outlined in section 2.1, all data sets have been assigned one of the following codes: FA (free access), SA (source approval), or IH (in-house GRID use only).

I. DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH: Each data set is accompanied by a descriptive legend and narrative statement supplying more details about its contents, history, purpose and limitations in terms of accuracy and quality where these have been determined by the relevant science group. The first line of the description includes the NAME of the data set.

2.4 Master Directory

From autumn 1990, a general online data directory containing the GRID meta-database, as well as a major part of NASA's Master Directory, will be accessible at GRID-Geneva. The parameters listed in section 2.3 are basically a printed subset of the GRID meta-database directory, which has 30 or more parameters per data set. Most of GRID's global data sets have already been entered in this meta-database; however, the others are being entered as time allows. Access to this GRID Data Directory will be through a normal telephone line with modem. Access details will be published in due course.

3. DATA REQUESTS

3.1 Release guidelines

The GRID database is maintained for the purpose of assisting individual nations and the international community in making sound decisions related to resource management and environmental planning, and where applicable to provide data for scientific studies. In general, requests for data from the archive will be filled according to data availability, GRID work load and the nature of the data set being requested. Requests will be queued with priority given to requests related to joint activities with GEMS or UNEP.

UN organisations, intergovernmental organisations, private research organisations, scientific and academic organisations, non-governmental organisations and national government organisations are all eligible to request data from the GRID archive. Requests from such eligible organisations for data with a "UA" (unrestricted access) rating will normally be filled without further clearance. Requests for data with a "SA" (source approval" rating will be referred to the relevant authority for clearance, and in some cases, the requestor will be advised to seek the data from source. Data sets with an "IH" (in-house) rating will not be distributed; however, information about such data sets, including the distributor's name, will be sent to eligible organisations on request.

Data requests from private commercial firms and private individuals will not normally be filled. Exceptional cases in which the intended use of the data would be of direct benefit to the United Nations or member states will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the GRID Coordinator, in consultation with the Director of GEMS.

There is no charge for data sets obtained from GRID. However, recipients are asked to supply an appropriate number of replacement media (normally, magnetic tapes or diskettes).

It is understood that due acknowledgement will be made to GRID, GEMS and UNEP, as well as the original data source, on all output products. Suitable wording would be: "Data provided by the Global Resource Information Database (GRID) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). GRID is an element of the Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS). The data originated at..." A short acknowledgement on, say, a graphic output product could consist of the acronyms: "GRID/GEMS/UNEP"

A copy of any significant outputs should also be provided to the GRID node applying the data or the GRID Coordination Unit, UNEP, Nairobi.

3.2 Release Format

GRID data sets can be supplied on (a) magnetic tape (b) diskette (3.5" or 5.25" floppy, MS DOS Format) or (c) optical disk (IBM 3363 200 MByte).

Data sets are normally distributed in the data format in which they are archived. Requests for data in other formats will only be filled in exceptional cases.

A copy of any available documentation will be sent with data sets.

3.3 Procedure for Requesting Data

Requests for GRID data should be sent to the nearest GRID office, at present as follows:

GRID-Nairobi
GEMS/UNEP
Box 30552
Nairobi, KENYA
Telex: 22068 UNEP-KE
Telefax: 254-2-520281

GRID-Geneva
6, rue de la Gabelle
Carouge, CH-1227
Geneva, SWITZERLAND
Telex: 422227 GRID-CH
Telefax: 41-22-438862

GRID-Arendal
VIAK
TK-Senteret, Longum Park
PO Box 1602, Myrene
N-4800 Arendal
NORWAY
Telefax: 47-41-35050

GRID-Sioux Falls
EROS Data Center
US Geological Survey
Sioux Falls, SD 57198
USA
Telefax: (605) 594 6589

These offices will forward requests to the responsible GRID node for processing. Data sets will be sent by UN pouch or international mail as appropriate. In the case of urgent requests, data sets can be sent by DHL at cost to the recipient.

All requests should clearly identify the following:

A) The requestor's name, title and organisational affiliation(s).

B) The nature of the project for which the data are being requested, including title, objectives, timetable, source(s) of finance, institutional framework, outputs, and use of outputs.

C) The software and hardware on which the data will be processed.

D) The identifier number(s) and name(s) of the data set(s) requested.

E) The desired output medium: magnetic tape, diskette or optical disk. Parameters such as density and blocksize should be specified. PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL DATA REQUESTS SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADEQUATE NUMBER OF DISKS OR TAPES. IN CASES WHERE INADEQUATE MEDIA ARE PROVIDED, THE REQUEST MAY BE FILLED AT THE DISCRETION OF UNEP, STRICTLY ON CONDITION THAT THE DEFICIT BE MET BY RETURN MAIL.

Every effort will be made to fill data requests promptly. However, at least four weeks should be allowed for receipt of data, particularly for data sets requiring source approval prior to distribution. With regard to all matters concerning data requests, the decision of the UNEP Office of the Environment Programme is final.