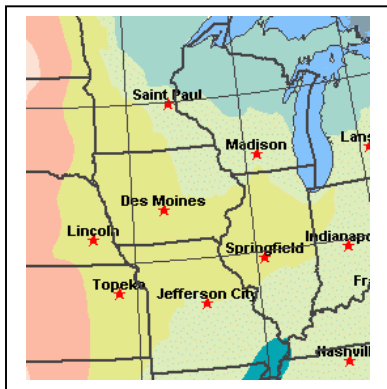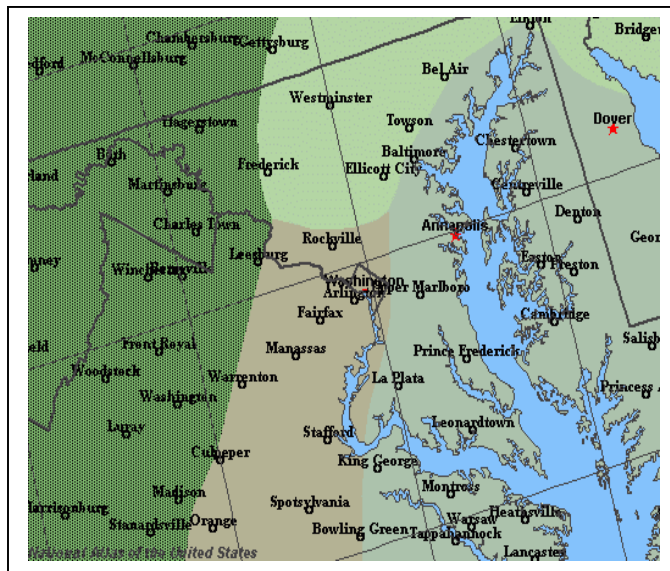# Classification of American Cities by Ecoregion
An aid to designing sustainable landscapes

Ecoregions are large, regional-scale ecosystems such as the Sonoran Desert. These regions are primarily based on climatic conditions and on the prevailing plant formations determined by those conditions. Classifying metropolitan areas by ecoregion forms a baseline for selecting native plants for landscaping and restoration as well as transferring information among similar cities. A source of ecoregion native plant information can be found in *Description of the Ecoregions of the United States* (Washington, DC: USDA Forest Service Miscellaneous Publication 1391, 1995). Using this approach, one can quickly characterize the "original and appropriate" ecology of a region. This information is an important guide to knowing which plants will thrive in a particular regional ecosystem in which cities are embedded. Designing urban and suburban landscapes that mimic the native vegetation by using regionally appropriate plants is the safest course to ensure landscape sustainability.

To see full-color maps of cities and ecoregions, visit the U.S. Geological Survey's *National Atlas of the United States* at http://nationalatlas.gov/whatsnew.html.

Part of Ecoregion Province Map of the US, 1995 edition, showing capitol cities of the Midwest. From the *National Atlas*.

Part of Ecoregion Province Map of the US, 1995 edition, showing cities and towns in the Washington, DC region. From the *National Atlas*.

To learn more about this approach, see *Ecoregion-Based Design for Sustainability* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2002) or contact Robert Bailey at rgbailey@fs.fed.us.