FOCUS GROUP FOR GROUND SURVEY

February 13, 2008
The St. Anthony Hotel
San Antonio, TX
Jim Steinman & Greg Filip

This focus group convened at 0850 with about 14 persons present. Only one or two persons present at this meeting attended the focus group at last year's meeting.

National survey maps were discussed and the comment was made that these maps are important to Congress. Also mentioned the Conditions Report and some of this information never gets transferred to the survey maps. Integration of state and federal data needs to be done in a more comprehensive manner. Things that don't cause mortality are lacking on national maps. Some mortality factors are not possible to ID from the air so ground truthing is necessary. Mixtures of pests make reporting more difficult. Why not develop a database for reporting types of damage that doesn't fit the national survey protocols?

How do we capture data? There was discussion of the Ground Survey Questionnaire with a copy of the questionnaire given to each one present. The questionnaire had 464 responses about various pests grouped by region. This survey was for insects and diseases only, and about 45 of 50 states responded. Many ground surveys for diseases have no aerial survey compliment because there is no way to detect certain diseases from the air. Also, sometimes aerial surveys will misidentify the causal agent for the mortality. This will always be a problem. It is hard to represent point data on the national map because of the scale of the map. It seems like much of this information is lost on the national map. There has been a request by aerial surveyors for a pest database georeferenced by county. There is an effort to tie this data to CAPS (Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey) and NAPAS. NAPAS is a county-level database of CAPS data and is available by Googling NAPAS. Can biological evaluations qualify as a ground survey and should that data be included? If the information in a biological evaluation can help identify or extend the range of the pest, then it should be included.

A handout of "Starter Questions for Discussion" was looked at and it included 12 questions. Several of the questions (1, 2, and 4) were basically covered as the ground survey questionnaire was discussed. Question 3 was not fully answered. Question 5-10 and 12 need additional discussion. Questions 8 and 9 are linked. States often have data that doesn't meet minimum area or reporting standards and therefore this data is not sent to the national database. What area (acres?) does a point of data represent? Can a series of points in a certain area be grouped and translated to a polygon?

Gary Man from the Washington Office presented information about the FH database which at this time only has data entered by USFS personnel. He used his

laptop and a live internet connection to show aspects of the database related to a pest event. There is a need to make the printed FH reports marketable to Congress. When the paper report is sent to Congress, most of the legislators never look at it. Congress is interested in big events and generally doesn't get concerned about localized events. He showed the data entry screen and how to select various fields such as type of survey, pest, how reported, damage type, host, native or exotic, setting (rural forest, urban, etc.), state(s), county(s), acres, and a narrative. There was discussion of how to report acres. Does a single point in a county represent the entire county? There was considerable interest in this database software or something similar being available for other uses. Gary took information from the group related to how to improve the database by changing or adding fields, like latitude and longitude for location. The database that Gary showed was developed by FHTET and just came on line recently. It was a hurry-up job and it is known that refinement is necessary.

Is there another way to display data besides a map? Some data that is important doesn't fit to a map format for display. However, there is a need to remember the purpose of this map. It is to show pest damage or mortality on a large scale and not intended to show detailed information. But at the same time, there needs to be a place for the more detailed data.

Gary Man showed a national mortality map for 2006. There was considerable discussion about the accuracy and usefulness of this map, especially in the western US where some areas of some states were completely red (dead!). Most of the data on the national mortality map is from aerial surveys.

Why don't field personnel enter the data on field data recorders, upload the data to a computer, QA the data, and then send it to the pest database? Set up the data recorder with drop-down menus that prompt the survey person to check boxes about what he/she is doing. Things like field vs. aerial, trap counts vs. egg masses, etc. are examples. The data entry screens on data recorders can be customized to fit almost any situation.

Another question brought up was how can we better utilize the information we already have or are collecting? It is important to keep in mind that data collection costs time and money. There should never be a request for data that will result in the expenditure of more dollars. In other words, don't ask for data that requires additional dollars unless funds are provided.

Is there a problem with displaying pest information that occurs on private lands? Texas displays oak wilt locations on private lands on GIS maps on the internet (texasoakwilt.org).

Develop a resolution to refine FH database for 2008 or 2009 by working with Gary Man. What is common data collected by state and federal personnel and how is this data collected?

GROUND SURVEY FOCUS GROUP
RESOLUTION #1
February 13, 2008

Whereas an operational Pest Event Database (PED) was recently developed by FHP for pest condition reporting, there is need to seek input from partners (internal and external) on how to improve PED to better document pest events. Be it resolved during 2008 the FHM management team should form a subcommittee to solicit input and suggest improvements for entry of the 2009 data.

GROUND SURVEY FOCUS GROUP
RESOLUTION #2
February 13, 2008

Whereas responses from the ground survey questionnaire suggest opportunities to expand use of ground survey data in national reporting, be it resolved during 2008 the FHM management team should form a subcommittee to identify commonalities among ground surveys that can easily be incorporated into national reports and maps.

GROUND SURVEY FOCUS GROUP
NOTE #1
February 13, 2008

A summary of the ground survey questionnaire be included with the minutes of the ground survey focus group session.