

Focus Group: **Forest Health Inputs into State Assessments**

Facilitators:

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Issues:

1. How are states doing the Forest Health portion of their Forest Resource Assessment Plans (FRAPs)?
2. What has been done and works well assessing the State's Forest Health?
3. What key elements are you including in your Forest Health inputs?
4. What formats are best suited for presentation (graphic, narrative, photos, etc.)?

Abstract: With the change to competitive grant funding for the States and the requirement of completing a Forest Resource Assessment Plan (FRAP) by each state outlining their greatest issues/concerns related to their forest resources, there is "mandated" interest/activity with respect to completing FRAPS. As forest health specialists, we are tasked to complete or at least contribute to the Forest Health portion of the FRAPs in our respective states. This has led to involved discussions regarding what defines forest health and how various components of forest health should be incorporated into FRAPs. We plan on exploring this in detail.

Participate in this focus group to **learn from current leaders** in FRAP including:

- Dr. Ron Billings, Forest Entomologist and Assistant Department Head, Texas Forest Service, College Station, TX
- John Watermolen, GIS/Stewardship/FRAP Coordinator, NV Div Forestry, DCNR, Carson City, NV

With their guidance and your forest health expertise, help craft workable outlines and guidelines for inclusion of forest health information into your state's FRAP and/or discuss how to best approach this very complex subject. Focus will be directed at issues such as 1) important criteria, 2) what format is the best to use for your plan, and 3) what has worked well that might be adaptable to your situation?

Why is this Focus Group needed? To respond to continuing questions about FRAP in relation to the need for meaningful forest health information incorporated into state Forest Resource Assessment Plans. To draw from and capitalize on the expertise/experience of colleagues? To consider various approaches to this critical element of state FRAPs.

Meeting Notes:

Ron Billings did the first presentation – TX Forest Service FRAP – need to have a GIS Specialist first – Southern FRAP developed as per the 2008 Farm Bill – Statewide Forest Resource Strategy – what to do about the FRAP landscapes – Annual Report on the use of Federal Funds. S&PF Redesign and 2008 Farm bill require FRAPs.

Specific Geospatial Layers required per Farm Bill. Assessment using weighted overlay analysis resulting in a composite index layer that delineates priority landscape areas. Southern Forests State Assessment Template Task Force – so did TX first – Ken Arney headed it up with USFS. Ron was the representative for the FH task force portion for the assessment.

Assessment was Issue based vs. Resource Based
Issues vary in importance so used a model assessment developed.

Issues emailed in a survey – 6 issues – 300 surveys and 86 responses – Most important was water quality and quantity – population growth. Most responders agreed with priority issues. Sent to mostly landowners from a list. Separate layers were evaluated for rural analyses using all or some of the SFLA input layers. Separate urban assessment layers.

Forest Health:

- Focused on Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) – 80s and 90 outbreaks, Oak Wilt in Rural & Urban Landscapes
- For SPB used SPB TX hazard map from FHTET and in central TX use mortality maps as an occurrence map.
- Spatial Overlay Analysis to make sense of data and simplify analysis. Issues ranked by program managers.

Issues:

Expected population growth layer, Central TX woodlands conservation, Sustainability of Forest Resources in E. TX, Water Quality and Quantity, Wildfire, Urban Forest Sustainability, Combine Rural and Urban Priority merged datasets
Website to get the TX FRAP:

<http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=5610>

Discussion:

Had to tie it into the TX wildlife plan as well. Most of the environmental groups were contacted in email as well. Final Draft being evaluated by folks ongoing.

Not too many surprises with the FRAP.

Questions on laying out priority for setting other pests that were not analyzed – how will these be addressed in the response plan – still working on the response plan. Use an assessment on # of invasives, etc. Need to include on response plan. Pine and Oak are main species so what are the threats? Response plan addresses threats while current

outbreaks address sustainability. Response Plan will be the more difficult document to develop. Green Infrastructure in Urban area – anyone else dealing with this?

John Watermolen -NV FRAP Presentation– Used any green infrastructure into one layer in initial layer analysis. Use urban boundary in final analysis.

Discussion:

- FLA will use TX template.
- Don't ignore non-GIS data – landowner age stats, etc – landownership issues with subdivisions.
- Layer weighting questions- subjective opinion of what importance of each issue ID done internally with program leaders. In TX only 6% federal so not a big player, but in other states like NV where it is 87% is federally incorporating the federal partners is important. Various states recommended that you have your program managers' work with your GIS folks to get this done – not that big of deal, just get it done using your SAP and GIS layers. Many states have done a lot of assessment work already so just add eco region areas and layers. Will you use GIS integration analysis for response plan (as well as issue development)? SAP process done in many areas and is best way to start the process. What is the vision of how these will tier into a National Assessment?– **Rob Mangold** - Tool Kit to be developed to use at desktop level for GIS level work, but from a programmatic point of view – don't know yet.
- Rob sees that the funding for S&PF would ID risks and mitigate them for the taxpayers using the State's FRAP and Assessment Plan. Targeted programs that produce measurable results.
- Comment about interfacing state assessments nationally -National Assessment ?– FS- law RPA1976 carries out RPA assessment 50 year outlook put out on a 10 yr cycle with 5 yr interim reports – so interesting to see how it will tie to State Assessments.

Don's modified Action Item- Ask for assistance from FHTET for 2006 Risk Map Forest Pest layers by state and FH Geodatabase with – written document as to what is available and how to obtain it – need the FH Information Data Strategy Frank Krist within 2 months. IDs information sources - such as: Could also use Montreal Process data for layers as well – published 2003 Assessment – go to Data Reports to get a lot of this data. Barbara Conkling will be able to put this link in next newsletter.

The “Forest Health Inputs into State Assessments” group discussed the need for a centralized conduit for State Assessment data dissemination on a website so States can get the latest available data needed for their assessments such as risk map geodatabases by state. Karen Ripley pointed out that this is currently available via the following S&P Forestry Redesign Update websites:

http://svinetfc4.fs.fed.us/clearinghouse/state_private/nationaldata.html

<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/>

Questions arose about:

1. What can be found on these websites and how usable is it?

2. We would like Frank Sapio to let us know what can his team provide and ask for this info to go into the next FHM monthly update. If there are questions about what is available is he able to provide that support to all the states?

***Have Frank Sapio address how available the data is available on site- i.e. ALB Risk Map, PA Risk Map, what is available? Barbara Conklin could include in next newsletter what is available with a caution to States to be aware that the Risk Map layers have limitations and should be clear when incorporated into the State Assessments.**

- Some states are using the risk map layer for their states. Karen is concerned about its usage – you have to know what it has in it and how it is incorporated – soils, climate, etc? Be careful on its usage –see how it lines up with your known datasets. Invasives issues may be of high concern along transportation corridors. FIA mandate – 5 year analytical reports so collaborate with FIA for data. In Nevada, we don't have enough FIA data to make it very usable. Come up with a list of analytical products that could be used – i.e. fragmentation databases for the states. The National Assessment is supposed to do this but is being developed concurrently so not ready for the States FRAP. FIA is willing to do it – Kurt Ritters could do the US and then the states could clip it out.
- **Don** – 2006 risk map with modification but some things are not covered in Risk Map – i.e. Hemlock WA – PA has their own dataset that is geo-referenced that they can use. Need each states risk map cut out layers.
- Margret -FS - FHS involvement – issues, antidotal information input, response plan input. Also discussion about using weed layer in analysis – 20-50% weed cover mitigation potential. Is a big issue in Florida.
- Concerns about process – missing out on a lot the info that is used to evaluate the analysis – need to determine the issues as you go along or know how the layers interact and what is the story being told by the issues are often regionally different – fund allocation based on how it will make a difference regionally. Interpretation analysis using narratives using the maps to show it. PA- Conservation Landscape initiatives – developed and already ID as high priority areas with analysis already done so GIS will be used to meet their goals and objectives.
- You need to ID risk and its relationship to values and need to prioritization of where funding will go based on these values. Systematic way to protect these values. David Chojnacky is putting together down woody material mapping layer maps for the west now that he is done with the east US.
- **Bud Mayfield** – Did you find certain scales coarseness of data that could not be used in the assessment? **JW**- vector datasets to raster datasets and all sampled to 30 meters so all equal layers. So probably loss a bit and gained a bit in making them all the same.

- John Watermolen – NV started FRAP about a 12-18 months ago. Help with SAP and so started FRAP building off of it. 2008 Farm Bill requirement done by 2010 done with updates every 5 years. GIS analysis is the first step in NV's FRAP.
- Discussed the NV FRAP Process especially GIS layering process. Also discussed presentations to various groups and their comments and data layers. I.e. – NRCS and NV Conservation District's –suggested choosing best productive soils for soil layer. Discussed next two phases of the FRAP processes to be done and how the report will be put together. Will do on a 10 Eco-region model to address neighboring state issues.
- Anticipate any changes in priority with new processes? No
- Why equal weighting on all layers? Starting Point using equal weighting than change if needed.
- The issues in the Farm Bill were somewhat different in NV – Biomass less important, Urbanization was not as high as was thought initially.
- Are the FHSpecialist involved in this process? Yes, but could be more, especially if tools are available nationally.