An Update Concerning the SRS FIA Program

SRS FIA Information Update

On May 22 of this year, FIA turned 90 years old! How did this come about? Well Congress enacted the McSweeney-McNary Forest Research Act (P.L. 70-466) to authorize a broad program of forest research by the Forest Service including a nationwide forest survey across all land ownerships:

...make and keep current a comprehensive inventory and analysis of the present and prospective conditions of and requirements for the renewable resources of the forest and rangelands of the United States.

This was the authorizing legislation for FIA and the first field survey work began in 1930. Back then FIA was known as Forest Survey and the job at hand was much different than what we do now. The McSweeney-McNary Forest Research Act was replaced in 1974, and in 1978 by the 1978 Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Act (P.L. 95-307) but the language above from the 1928 McSweeney-McNary Forest Research Act was repeated in this new legislation.

FIA has come a long way since 1928. A lot has changed but a lot has not. Field plots are still the backbone of FIA. Field crews still visit field locations on a regular basis. There is still a need to disseminate information via FIA reports and publications. We still utilize aerial photographs. What has changed—all the details to deliver a state-wide inventory—relational databases, field data recorders instead of paper, the utilization of remote imagery to supplement and complement the field data, etc. We have moved from a timber inventory to a forest inventory and now we are expanding into urban inventory. We are currently examining ways to inventory and monitor all treed land with the Image Change Estimation project, and developing procedures to inventory linear tree features—riparian forests and windbreaks.

All of this expansion has not replaced our historical information but is in addition to this information. I wonder what FIA will look like in another 90 years? I assume that future FIA staff will build onto the successes of what is being done today—just like we built upon individuals within FIA that preceded us. All I know for certain is that I will not be here to see it!

If you have any technical questions regarding FIA, please submit those questions to Janet Griffin (janetgriffin@fs.fed.us) and we will address them in a future issue of The Inventory. Thank you for your interest in FIA and please let us know how we may serve you in the future.

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SRS-FIA forester and UN FAO correspondent Sonja Oswalt met with the North American Forest Commission Inventory and Monitoring Working Group in Guadalajara, Mexico June 4–8, 2018. Participants included representatives from the forestry agencies of Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The meeting participants discussed inventory-relevant collaborations between the three countries, including collaborative work in mangrove systems, collaborative opportunities with Latin America and Amazonia, further development of the North American Forest Database online tool, and cooperation on reporting efforts to the global Forest Resources Assessment. Additionally, all countries shared updates on current improvements and opportunities in their individual forest inventories, as well as challenges that countries may share. The next meeting of the Inventory and Monitoring Working Group will be held in the United States in spring of 2019, with Sonja Oswalt as the chair for that meeting.

For more information, contact Sonja Oswalt at 865-862-2058 or soswalt@fs.fed.us.
Current Movements in Resource Use: As We See it From the Stump

It has been another busy year for the Resource Use section. There are exciting changes happening throughout the section that hopefully will streamline the data collection process. We are thankful for the quality participation and assistance we receive from our State partners and Southern Utilization and Marketing Group (SUM).

Utilization Program

In recent months the last remaining States were moved to the latest version of the utilization study data collection program. Older versions of the program were independent platforms that required learning a new program with a slightly different approach to retrieving and transmitting once collected.

The new data collection program named Midas FTS is incorporated into the Midas data collection program and will share many of the same features such as: the same general appearance, historical data retrieval, data transmission, and program updating. In addition to the aforementioned features, State coordinators will have the ability to track data collection using the online report generating tool. We are hoping this latest program change will somewhat ease the data collection effort for cruisers and coordinators.

New Cross-Border Forest Inventory Database Now Available Online

A new publication authored by scientists from Mexico, the United States, and Canada detailing the creation of a new cross-border forest inventory database is now available online.

Abstract: Forests cannot be managed sustainably without reliable data to inform decisions. National Forest Inventories (NFI) tend to report national statistics, with sub-national stratification based on domestic ecological classification systems. It is becoming increasingly important to be able to report statistics on ecosystems that span international borders, as global change and globalization expand stakeholders’ spheres of concern. The state of a transnational ecosystem can only be properly assessed by examining the entire ecosystem. In global forest resource assessments, it may be useful to break national statistics down by ecosystem, especially for large countries. The Inventory and Monitoring Working Group (IMWG) of the North American Forest Commission (NAFC) has begun developing a harmonized North American Forest Database (NAFD) for managing forest inventory data, enabling consistent, continental-scale forest assessment supporting ecosystem-level reporting and relational queries. The first iteration of the database contains data describing 1.9 billion ha, including 677.5 million ha of forest. Data harmonization is made challenging by the existence of definitions and methodologies tailored to suit national circumstances, emerging from each country’s professional forestry development. This paper reports the methods used to synchronize three national forest inventories, starting with a small suite of variables and attributes.


Keywords: Forest inventory, Biometrics, Global forestry, Forest assessment, North America.

Timber Product Output

In January the bi-annual Timber Products Output (TPO) began collecting mill data for the 2017 mill survey. The SUM group through a State and private grant have graciously funded our State partners for the 2017 mill survey in an effort to increase participation and response rate. So far this has been a successful partnership, as response rates have increased from previous surveys.

Currently, a great percentage of the mill surveys received have been entered into our data entry system, and others will be entered as we move forward. We are looking to have all 2017 mill surveys in and completed by late summer. Upon completion of mill survey entry, TPO will begin preparing to process and develop data for 2017 reporting.

Starting in 2019 TPO will shift to an annual sample design for mill sampling. This will allow our unit to supply more up to date information regarding the changing forest industry. In addition, the group is working on new and improved digital engagement tools to enhance data delivery.

For more information, contact Sonja Oswalt at 865-862-2058 or soswalt@fs.fed.us.

For more information, contact Larry Cyprian at 865-862-2054 or ltcyprian@fs.fed.us.
The week of June 4th–8th, SRS-FIA hosted three foresters visiting from the Forest Inventory Planning Institute (FIPI) of Vietnam. FIPI has been working on developing a new inventory and monitoring program for Vietnam’s forests. As a world leader in inventory programs, FIA was selected to share our experience and expertise with these colleagues. SRS-FIA has been collaborating with FIPI on establishing their new inventory program for several years, assisting them with various stages of program development and implementation.

As FIPI is nearing completion of its first year of data collection with their new inventory program, this exchange was focused on quality assurance (QA) practices, and included detailed coverage of practices, building on the general program overviews shared in previous exchanges. FIPI program director Dr. Nguyễn Nghĩa Biên, was joined by Vũ Quang Hiền, and Đặng Quang Thuyên, for this information exchange. All three have been intensely involved with the development of QA protocols for the new inventory program.

The week of information sessions included two field based days of QA activities in South Carolina. Two experienced SRS-FIA QA foresters, and four State partner FIA foresters, led demonstrations on data checks on the plot, as well as how to score and write reports for the various types of QA check plots. In addition, two and a half days of office based QA sessions took place in the Knoxville, TN office. These sessions covered a range of off-plot QA activities. The sessions, led by 15 experts from the SRS-FIA staff covered aspects of QA from pre-field and imagery work, through development of tools for improved data collection, to post-collection editing, and QA database creation and publication. Keeping with the theme of the exchange being on detailed coverage, all of the sessions were based on FIPI’s specific topics of interest and were designed to be open and interactive, with demonstrations and Q&A sessions being the norm, as opposed to formal presentations.

By the week’s end the visiting foresters had learned a great deal and were better prepared to take the final steps in establishing their permanent inventory system. As well, the SRS-FIA staff lucky enough to sit in on several of the week’s sessions gained insights about the contributions our co-workers make to the program.

For more information, contact Kerry Dooley at 865-862-2098 or kjdooley@fs.fed.us.
Đặng Quang Thuyên (left) and Greg Smith discuss duff and litter data measurement, a practice in both countries inventory systems. (photo by Kerry Dooley)

Jeremy Rogers (left) measures a tree’s azimuth, and Greg Smith (far right) locates d.b.h. on a pine, while Vũ Quang Hiền, and Đặng Quang Thuyên observe. (photo by Kerry Dooley)


Current Status of FIA Data Posted

For more information, contact Ali Conner at 865-862-2228 or aconner@fs.fed.us.

Status of Current Field Inventories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Cycle start date</th>
<th>Subcycle start date</th>
<th>Cycle and inventory year of current inventory</th>
<th>Percent of current subcycle collection completed</th>
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<td>10:2018</td>
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<td>Florida</td>
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<td>June, 2017</td>
<td>11:2017</td>
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<td>Kentucky</td>
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<td>Oct., 2017</td>
<td>09:2017</td>
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<td>Jan., 2018</td>
<td>09:2017</td>
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Information compiled June 19, 2018.

For more information, contact Angie Rowe at 865-862-2052 or krowe@fs.fed.us.
FIA is a USDA Forest Service research work unit which collects, analyzes, and reports on data pertaining to our forest land in the Southern region. This region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Virginia.

FIA conducts this program of research to improve the understanding of the Southern forest ecosystem.

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**National and Southern FIA Web sites of Interest**

National FIA Web site: http://www.fia.fs.fed.us
National Timber Product Output (TPO) database available at: http://srsfia2.fs.fed.us/
Information specific to Southern States: http://srsfia2.fs.fed.us/
Electronic copies of SRS FIA publications at: http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/