

FIA 2013 National User Group Meeting Notes
New Orleans, LA
March 13-14, 2013

Purpose: To learn about recent progress in the FIA program and to provide an opportunity for FIA staff to hear from users.

Agenda, Presentations and Attendees: Archived at <http://www.ncasi2.org/downloads/BWG/>

Follow-up items and strong endorsements/concerns from the the user group:

1) Put a firewall around the core FIA program: Generally, users are happy with the annual inventory, and they consider this to be the core FIA program. They don't object to FIA working in other areas, but they don't want funding for the core program to be used to support other activities. Urban inventory of trees in cooperating cities was a focal point of this discussion. User concerns were assuaged after FIA staff explained that urban funding would be specifically appropriated and FIA would train partners to do the field work. The core program should be clearly defined in the Strategic Plan.

2) Other user endorsed FIA activities:

a) Timber Product Output Program – TPO is considered to be second in importance only to the core annual inventory program by many FIA users. TPO provides important data for economic development, sustainable forestry and jobs in the forest sector. Users encouraged FIA to develop a statistically sound TPO annualization method. Users also want TPO to be as active in all regions as it currently is in the Southern Region.

b) National Woodland Owner Survey – Users value the NWOS, but would like to see it expanded to include information on all forest owners, not just family forest owners. In particular, TIMOs and REITs have become important forest land managers/owners and should be included in the NWOS.

c) Urban Forest Inventory – This is a new area that FIA is moving into. Users understood that inventories of trees in cooperating cities could provide important data on forest carbon storage, biomass and recreational uses. Users were supportive of clearly defining the statistical methods, benefits, costs and funding opportunities for this activity. Users were concerned that funding from the core program could be diverted to urban inventory, which led to the interest in firewalls.

d) Interior Alaska Inventory – Users viewed this as an opportunity to implement and test multistage sampling techniques using 3 phases of remote sensing and one ground sample phase in a region where the standard annual inventory design could not be justified for economic and logistical reasons. This method is expected to be cost effective and provide the first ever inventory of interior Alaska. See firewall comment.

3) Map Based Estimation: This refers to using k-nearest neighbor techniques to match FIA plots with pixels to provide the possibility of summing pixels to obtain statistical estimates for user defined polygons. Users could appreciate the potential of this method, but felt that FIA needs to provide reliable confidence limits and strongly caution clients about product limitations.

4) Tree Planting Data: Users approved of FIA helping to reestablish/improve efforts to collect data on tree planting. These data can be used to address concern that was expressed at this meeting about possible over-harvesting of small diameter plantation material. These data are important for preventing a forest sustainability problem in the long run.