Forest Inventory and Analysis
Band System

FIA Fact Sheet Series

The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program of the USDA Forest Service is committed to increasing and improving the level of consistency in all stages of its national core inventory system - planning, data collection, photo and image interpretation, information management, compilation, analysis and reporting. This can only be accomplished by close communication and cooperation among all internal regional FIA personnel and external partners.

FIA Band System
The Band system is comprised of a set of technical committees. The term "Band" is synonymous with "Team" or "Group," and is used to uniquely identify these special FIA committees. The Band system was formed by the FIA leadership to provide a forum whereby technical experts in FIA, the National Forest System, State and Private Forestry, and State agencies across the US work together to produce one nationally consistent, efficient, and complete FIA program. As a secondary benefit, the Band system allows colleagues with similar interests and abilities to share information about their experiences in conducting regional FIA surveys.

Each Band is tasked to apply its technical skills to identify weaknesses and inconsistencies in the FIA program, and to develop strategies to resolve problems. Bands review each other's work and ideas for system improvements, and provide feedback with respect to their area of expertise.

Band-to-Band and within-Band interaction is essential to the process. Band members communicate regularly via e-mail, conference calls, and periodic meetings. Monthly conference calls

are held for Band Leaders to discuss and resolve inter-band issues. Bands also maintain their own website, which contains documentation on meetings, current issues, and work completed. A Band Conductor oversees and orchestrates the system, facilitating Band harmony and ensuring that their work progresses.

Chartered Bands
At present, there are four Bands chartered by the FIA Management Team. The Band system was restructured in September 2007 to improve accountability and provide more supervisory control of band work. This structural change merged two bands and established a Core Group within each Band, comprised of the FIA regional group leads. Each Band revised their charter to update the function and direction of the Band.

Analysis and Reporting Band – is charged with converting FIA data into information for issue- and client-based analyses that address the extent, condition, health, and sustainability of the Nation's forested ecosystems. This includes developing and designing reporting templates for the early years of annual inventories and the completion of periodic inventories. This Band is also responsible for developing comprehensive 5-year analytical reports that address the longer-term needs of state, regional, national, and international users.

Data Acquisition Band – is charged with developing, testing, and documenting the most efficient and consistent standard approaches to collecting core field data for Phases 2 and 3. This includes developing and maintaining the National Core Field Guide, training and safety programs, and quality assurance techniques.

Information Management and Compilation Band – is charged with developing and maintaining a National Information Management System (NIMS) for core FIA and regional data. The system includes standard procedures for data collection, editing, validation, compilation, and reporting of internal and external databases. They also develop web applications for data distribution to outside users.

Techniques Research Band – is charged with improving the efficiency, timeliness, and quality of the FIA program by addressing appropriate problem areas. The Band focuses on expanding the existing methodologies and product lines by identifying and testing new technologies and techniques in a nationally coordinated fashion.

Band Membership
In addition to the Core membership of group leads from each of the FIA work units (Anchorage, AK; Knoxville, TN; Ft. Collins, CO; Ogden, UT; Newtown Square, PA; St. Paul, MN; and Portland, OR), other regional FIA staff participate in the Bands. A state representative is appointed by each of the three National Association of State Foresters (NASF) regions - North, South, and West. State and Private Forestry, and National Forest System each appoint one or more members. Each Band also has a representative from the FIA Management Team to provide leadership and communication between the Band and the FIA Management Team. Each Band may also add extra members, as needed.

A Band Leader (regional group leads rotate this position), provides direction and guidance on Band business and serves as the Band's liaison to the FIA Management Team.

Current Band Priorities

Analysis:
- Create national standards for volume, biomass and carbon estimations.
- Continue refinement of core reporting format and guidelines.
- Develop standards and procedures for nationally consistent quality assurance analyses.
- Identify other critical tasks that will influence completion of above products or ability of analysts to complete standard analysis and reports.
- Serve as FIA focal point for addition of new attributes and development of new indicators.

Data Acquisition:
- Update and maintain FIA National Field Procedures Manual. Complete Version 6.0, and rework the framework for future editions to provide flexibiltiy for inclusion of other inventories, such as rangeland, urban, and nonforest lands.
- Standardize the pre-field process and develop a system that will serve the needs of all regions.
- Develop a system to share information about safety issues among regions.
- Continue work to refine a comprehensive national training program and quality assurance field methodology.
- Devise a security plan for field data collection electronic devices that complies with USFS Chief Information Office standards.
- Work with other bands to standardize remeasurement protocols.

Information Management:
- Update and maintain NIMS compilation system and the public FIA database to accommodate changes for version 5.0. Document NIMS processes and revise FIADB users guides.
- Continue development and improvement of field data collection program (MIDAS) and associated documentation.
- Document and test procedures in preparation of migration to new Forest Service National Data Center.
- Continue development and enhancement of data tools available to the public on the FIA Web site.
- Develop efficient methods to convert FIA data to the National Forest System Veg data format.

Techniques Research:
- Improve Phase 3 estimations by identifing techniques to quantify potential correlations among Phase 2 and Phase 3 variables. Determine alternative sample intensity of appropriate Phase 3 variables.
- Publication of the FIAtlas - a set of 80-125 maps of the Nation's forest resources, depicting their spatial distribution, pattern, and variability.
- Develop ROADMAP (Research On-line Access Database Monitoring All Projects) - an easily maintained, web-accessible database holding information about all current and past R&D projects supported either fully or in part by FIA.
- Formulate a technological tool that enables efficient estimation of tree canopy cover on all P2 plots using dot-count methods and aerial imagery.

For more information about the FIA Program, please visit our national FIA website: http://www.fia.fs.fed.us

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