



Community Engagement Newsletter

January 2021

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NICE vs. RITS Database: When & How to Use

Barbara McGuiness (NRS Communication and Science Delivery), gave a presentation to the Community Engagement Core Team in December on the utility of the NICE database. The NICE (NatureWatch, Interpretation and Conservation Education) database is the database of record for reporting outreach and education activities and sharing agency accomplishments with partners and leadership.

Barbara also provided information on when to use RITS vs. NICE. Simply put, RITS is used to record scientific publications and science delivery and NICE is used to record outreach, education activities and accomplishments.

The link to the NICE database is [here](#).

The meeting was recorded and condensed to share the main points Barbara conveyed. For those interested, please follow this [link](#) to access the recording. Documents containing more information on when and how to use NICE can be accessed [here](#).

TPO: Welcome New Team Lead – Consuelo Brandeis & TPO User-Group Meeting

Timber Products Output – *New Team Lead*

Consuelo Brandeis is a research forester with the USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station, Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program. She was recently assigned to lead the FIA's national timber products monitoring program, coordinating regional efforts to gather and report data on forest resource use. Consuelo began her career in the Forest Service in 2012, as a research forester with FIA's Methods and



Consuelo Brandies, Research Forester, SRS FIA

Techniques section, where she worked on various research projects exploring issues related to forest resource and economic conditions and their effects on timber resource use both in the southern region and the Nation.

Consuelo holds a BS in Forest Engineering from the University of Talca, Chile, an MS in Environmental Policy from the University of Denver, and a Ph.D. in Natural Resources (Economics) from the University of Tennessee. She holds an adjunct faculty position with the University of Tennessee and is a member of the Society of American Foresters and the International Society of Forest Resource Economics.

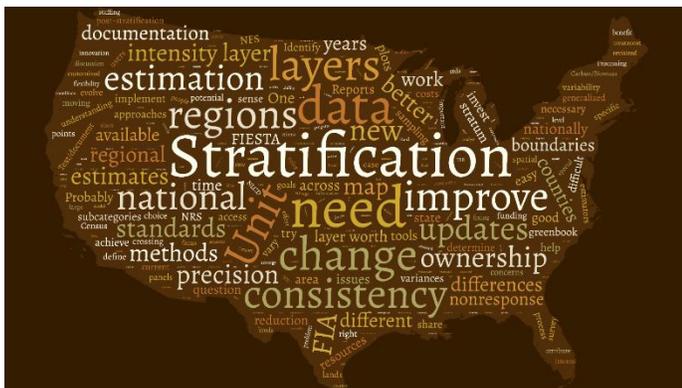
In her free time, Consuelo enjoys hiking, traveling, baking, and crafting. Welcome Consuelo!

Timber Products Output - User Group Meeting (updated)

The 2021 Timber Products Output (TPO) User Group Meeting will be held from February 2-5. Pre-recorded sessions will be available around January 25th. Invitations to the meeting will be sent out around the same time. The link, for those that do not receive an invitation (and can register at no cost), can be accessed at: https://whova.com/web/saftp_202102/. Agenda can be accessed [here](#) and also at the SAF link.

Sci-Ops Meeting Recap by Karen Schleeweis (updated)

Thank you, to all attendees of the first FIA Sci-Ops workshop, for your willingness to show up and share ~ it's the people that make FIA a success! Thank you to the PM's for their commitment to scale FIA as a National learning organization, for meeting support, and for their participation



Word Cloud from Sci-Ops Stratification Meeting

The first FIA Sci-Ops workshop topic was Stratification, specifically, post-stratification to reduce variance and mitigate nonresponse. The virtual meetings, organized by the Techniques Research Band (TRB) with facilitation from the National Ops team, took place in 4 sessions over two days. The Sci-Ops format aims to gather the wider FIA community of interested people together around a topic of interest. In this exploratory workshop, current post-stratification processes in each region were presented to better understand the topic nationally and its associated challenges, changing needs and potential solutions. Stratification tools and optimization are usually the purview of statisticians, but the underlying data needs, reporting, and

communication/documentation on the topic have implications throughout FIA. More than 80 participants from across FIA regions joined the first day, illustrating the interest in post-stratification across regions and across functional areas (bands).

The first three sessions focused on building a common foundation with presentations on how we currently conduct post-stratification for FIA estimates, the nature of nonresponse, and the emerging tools, data and techniques that could impact how we approach post-stratification. It was clear from these sessions that FIA is poised to benefit from the incubator of regional research and optimization, with new ideas and approaches introduced from across the regions. It was also clear that attendees were largely unfamiliar with current post-stratification work and processes outside of their region. Ideas raised in these sessions that seemed to resonate nationally include 1) reporting the statistical relevance, by applying confidence envelopes around common metrics, when testing/updating parts of the stratification schema 2) the spatial and thematic precision and thematic compatibility of maps used to post-stratify matters more than the frequency of updates when estimating parameters of interest, including volume and area 3) there are potential single point failures where only one specialist (per region) is responsible for and fully aware of a unit's current optimization practices, logic, and evaluations 4) an interest in plurality and more regular discussion/sharing across regional stratification specialists 5) challenges in explaining to data users within and outside FIA whether changes in the values of estimated parameters are due to changes in the stratification process (method artifacts) or due to actual changes reflected in plot-level data. All agreed that this distinction (real change or method artifact) and how to address it will only become more important as we emphasize trend reporting from remeasured plot data.

It was in the small group break-out discussion session that participants focused on “where, if anywhere, do we go from here?”. Eight discussion groups were organized with an average of 4 contributors in each. A pre-session poll (used to organize and adjust the discussion session) suggested $\frac{3}{4}$ of the discussion group participants wanted to tackle the question “What ways can we improve FIA stratification nationally?”. The second most popular discussion topic was “additional National consistency data needs”. The summary of this pre-session poll can be found [here](#).

It will take a while to sift through the group discussion notes and assemble a coherent summary of key meeting findings. However, the ‘report back’ part of the discussion session highlighted some reoccurring themes. Each group immediately dove under the hood of “national consistency” teasing apart the many facets of #natcon. The discussions turned away from the nuances of regional explorations and emerging techniques to ask what aspects *should* be common and the related needs to support cross region consistency in stratification decision points and practices. Most groups echoed that larger gains in national consistency would be achieved by investing in defining standards and guidelines rather than by developing and prescribing a single detailed method to optimize a national post-stratification schema. This perspective appeared to be supported with cross group convergence that 1) we cannot afford to focus on improving every aspect of post-stratification, 2) regional schemes have been developed to address local conditions that are not applicable or prevalent elsewhere 3) investing in nationally consistent access to tools and nationally consistent data layers would bring more immediate gains. The discussion group format allowed identification and prioritization of key concepts and action. Here we’ve mentioned the convergent themes; however, the format also captured relevant divergent themes. A group of specialists will continue the work together to evolve and elevate the many threaded conversations into a coherent vision with potential follow up actions. In the meantime, the word cloud above suggests some of the discussion notes content.

All seminar materials are available in this [box folder](#), including the [full notes](#), and [session recording links](#). The summary from each break-out group in the discussion session starts around minute 95 in the 4th sessions’ recording.

For all who attended, if you have not already done so, your feedback in this [close-out meeting poll](#) would be greatly appreciated.

UNIMS

Version 1.4 of UNIMS was sent to the CIO in December and was released to PROD in mid-January. The release was focused on sample definition utilities (Sample Organization and Sample Frame) and a GEO utilities overhaul. Another release, 1.4.1, is imminent. This is a new, internal clean-up release. Very small, very fast to primarily remove temporary backup tables (from 1.4.0 data migration to new structures) and make any critical bug fixes that may be identified within the 1.4 release. We will also be doing a cleanup of GitHub at the same time.

The next three planned releases of UNIMS will be larger, yet highly focused. While the UNIMS Team works hard to maintain the established schedule, please note that situations do arise that may impact the availability of the Team, and thus our schedule.

- Version 1.5, which is anticipated for release in April 2021, will provide support for FIA program enhancements, including One Species List support (Prototype Taxonomy structure in FS_FIA_REFERENCE; Species lists and exclusion zones), sample selection algorithm, Urban compilation upgrades (especially site index/tree management), 9.0 Field Guide updates, implementation of Publication Data Standard (PDS), and Plot Visit Tracking table.
- Version 1.6, which is anticipated for release in October 2021, will be focused entirely on the new requirement to provide more immediate capability for Urban GRM compilations. This release will include both business logic (PL/SQL package) as well as supporting data structures to store output, as well as publication format for these data. The work for this release will be approached in such a way that it will also lay the groundwork for the future P2 and P3/Indicator GRM compilations. Additionally, this release will accommodate the new iTree input format change.
- Version 1.7, which is anticipated for release in early 2022 is a newly added release to support/incorporate the new National models for Volume and BioMass. This release will utilize the external compilation library system (FICS), which is currently a pilot effort, that will be a combination of PL/SQL and Java libraries. This release is really a prototype to deploy our first attempt at a modernized compilation system.

Link to Portfolios, FIA-Related Social Media & FIA Treesearch

To keep a consistent location where portfolios can be accessed as well as the latest FIA related social media activity, portfolio links and links to social media are included in the newsletter. Additionally, all FIA-related publications can be located at the link below using a tool that searches R&D's *Treesearch* database. Follow the links below for the latest information on portfolios and social media activity. And a reminder, any social media post related to FIA, please ensure to use the following handle: #USDA_FIA

Carbon: <https://usfs.box.com/s/123jxi29zlfx0656pc18651q0qdfrg1p>

Biomass: <https://usfs.box.com/s/jhet52fknd2adzd7xvg2hxsjarxxxuww>

Digital Engagement: <https://usfs.box.com/s/dglnpdxpp3naskfuzr6ao6v7as4gzzph>

Land Use/Land Cover: <https://usfs.box.com/s/avnvyr0b7j4jkph7qbtppxxt5vppipqy>

National Landowner Survey: <https://usfs.box.com/s/ffj9s2bwyzh0rvo2esl964d514j3jvlj>

Small Area Estimation: <https://usfs.box.com/s/iavhy0afitsibyswx2cpm75mukhoxk7s>

Timber Products Output: <https://usfs.box.com/s/4mmb318nxjz9j0w98ggykdo1ica99j8z>

Urban FIA: <https://usfs.box.com/s/7iobdmd7vbkel0frp3ukjui75rv97mu>

Community Engagement: <https://usfs.box.com/s/wk07xvr9fent3be610lsfpzer4iswz1y>

FIA in Social Media: https://twitter.com/search?q=USDA_FIA&src=typd

FIA Publications in Treesearch:

The tool to search FIA-specific publications within *Treesearch* can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/internal/treesearch/>

To search FIA-specific publications using this tool:

- 1) Click on drop-down and choose “All Forest Inventory & Analysis Units”
- 2) Choose date range
- 3) Click Submit

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