Forest Inventory & Analysis

FIA National Newsletter

April 2022

In This Issue:

Earth Day & FIA Television Feature

The FIA program, as well as FIA staff, were featured in a Hearst Television Production in honor of Earth Day. The piece highlighted FIA as a premier data source for forest monitoring used in understanding the impacts of climate change. The news investigators accompanied an FIA crew on the Cibola National Forest as well as interviewed RMRS' John Shaw on using tree ring data to understand effects of drought. It was a very cool piece highlighting some of FIA's awesome work!

Drought stalking America's forests

Hearst Television
A U.S. Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis crew conducting a forest census on a plot inside the Cibola National Forest in New Mexico

To read the accompanying content and view the piece, follow the link here.

PNW's Brittany Benjamin Featured in *NRM Today*

FIA urban inventory crew leader/QA, Brittany Benjamin, was featured in the April edition of *Natural Resources Management Today*. It's a great article not only emphasizing the crucial work FIA completes but our remarkable staff as well!

Follow the link here for the full story.

NRM Today Student Profile

Southern U.'s Brittany Benjamin Finds a Home in Urban FIA

By Steve Wilent

As a high school student in New Orleans, Brittany Benjamin had her sights set on being an English major in college and perhaps becoming a journalist. But when a recruiter invited her to enroll in a summer institute for high school students at Southern University (SU), all that changed. The program, Beginning Agricultural Youth Opportunities Unlimited (BAYOU), lets students "gain 'first hand' knowledge about career opportunities in Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, and related disciplines" over three weeks at the university.

Continued on page 4

Brittany Benjamin works for the Urban FIA program, part of the US Forest Service's Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) division. Photo courtesy of Brittany Benjamin.

NRM Today ◆ April 2022

1

National Issues Update

Current national issues that require attention to resolve are moving through the Program's new change management process. A standard operating procedure (SOP) document was created to outline the process and can be accessed through the FIA Resource Center here. Another crucial part of the process that is being developed is communicating the change, part of step 4 located in Phase 3 (Execution/Implementation). Below is an excerpt from the latest version of the SOP that outlines a process for assisting in communicating the change effectively.

Step 4: Communications plan

Change is most effective when it is communicated. Change must be communicated pre-emptively (e.g., regular updates on progress and potential impacts as the change is moving through the process) but also once the change is fully implemented. Stakeholders feel more invested and therefore more amenable to the change(s) when they are updated as the change is moving through the change management process.

Once the COA is determined and moving towards implementation, more communication must take place to ensure affected individuals are aware of the impacts of the change. For example, external clients may not be aware of a change moving through the process, a change that could ultimately affect their research or estimations. Therefore, a solid plan that communicates the change and impacts once it's implemented, is absolutely crucial. To effectively communicate the change, there are some steps to follow as well as various communication aids to available to assist.

1) *National Communication Strategy for FIA* - outlining roles, responsibilities, objectives, etc. of effectively communicating and things to consider when communicating within FIA. This document is an overview, 30,000' view, of communicating within and across the program.

2) *Implementing Change Communication Tips* - This document outlines ways to communicate the implementation of programmatic changes to different audiences.

3) *Communication Plan Template* – This document is a template that can be used to communicate the change to any audience. Once National Communication Strategy for FIA and Implementing Change Communication Tips are reviewed, this template can be used to actually communicate the change.

The project manager should work with the charter team to identify the appropriate avenues of communication as well as roles needed in communicating the change. Stakeholders should already be aware

of the proposed changes and timeline (see Phase 1, step 6b; Phase 2, step 10) so this communication plan should build on the communication that took place earlier in the process.

Communication Methods include push, pull and interactive communication. When we push information to stakeholders, we are sending them information one-way via emails, voicemail messages, newsletters, status reports, etc. When the stakeholder visits our websites or we respond to an inquiry, the stakeholder is pulling information. An engagement is a much deeper form of communication. An engagement is interactive by including an exchange of information between ourselves and the stakeholders. Ideally, we need to plan for all three types of communication with our stakeholders. You may use this Communication Plan Template to plan communication for your project.

Updated Biomass Equations, Cull Volume

Updated biomass equations have been in the works for many years and are in the final stages of implementation. New equations will be updated in UNIMS in May of 2022 and changes are anticipated to be reflected in FIA's National DataMart in July of 2022. Communicating this change internally and to our clients is part of the roll-out and a communication plan for sharing information about this change is currently underway. An informational bulletin was created and linked in the new "Urgent Notifications & Bulletins" section of the national website. The bulletin can be directly accessed here.
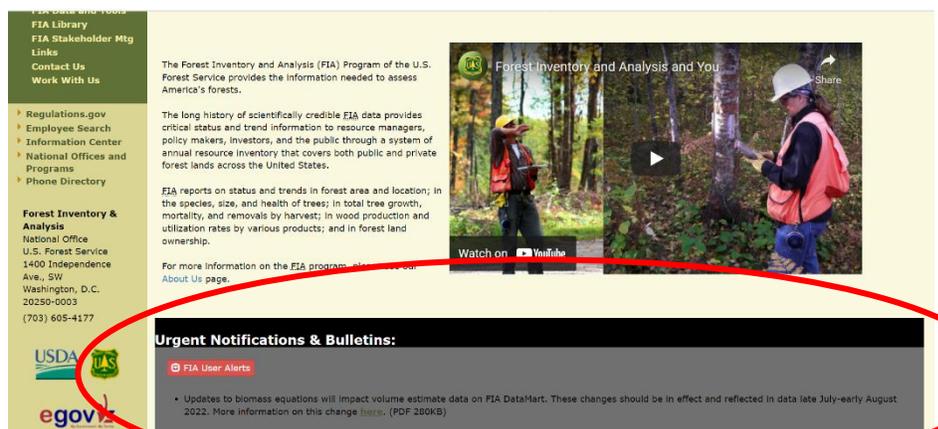
GRM Tree Status Codes

GRM Tree Status is nearing the end of Phase 2 of the change management process. A group of subject matter experts, identified via Band Leader requests for interest, have been participating in biweekly meetings since February. The team has thoroughly articulated the "Problem Statement" to promote shared understanding of the issue and they have identified multiple courses-of-action (COA) to address the problem. Screening criteria have been developed, and each possible COA must meet the screening criteria in order to be consider a valid solution. An example of screening criteria includes the ability of the solution to determine how a tree was utilized (e.g., commercial or non-commercial) if it's not currently standing.

After comparing the COA's against the screening criteria identified, only two COA's remain. The remaining COA's differ in that one COA requires further defining current codes and one COA requires the addition of data items to ensure screening criteria are met. The team is ensuring whichever solution/COA is chosen, works for all inventories (i.e., urban, P2, etc.). The team anticipates a recommended COA by the end of May, at which point the issue will move into Phase 3 of the process.

National Website Update: "Urgent Notifications" Section Added

As FIA continues to evolve, the program strives to continue meeting customer needs. As part of this effort, we are adding a section on the FIA National Website to convey important and urgent information to our users. Depending on the topic, further information may be linked (e.g., informational bulletin or briefing) within the section. The new addition will go live within the next week (maybe today!) so bookmark the page here and be sure to check out the section for any major updates or changes!

Announcements: EVALIDator 2.0 Update

Work continues on the updated version of EVALIDator 2.0. Again, the necessity to update was a result of changing the coding language to Python to ensure CIO concerns were addressed. From a user standpoint, the new version is similar to the old version. However, a tutorial video is being created and will be made available within the next week. The video can be accessed through the EVALIDator webpage here. Additionally, a briefing paper was distributed in February which contains more information on the change. The briefing paper can be accessed here.

For more information on the FIA National Newsletter, please contact:

Summer Dunn
Community Engagement Portfolio Lead
summer.l.dunn@usda.gov