

FIA National Newsletter

May 2022

In This Issue:

- [Back to the Field in the West](#)
- [FIA Program Advocacy Letter to Congress](#)
- [National Issues Updates](#)
- [Announcements, Meetings, etc.](#)

Field Season Begins in the West

The field season has officially commenced in the western states. It is no small feat to complete plot loads in the west considering not only the seasonality challenges associated with completing field work (e.g., limited access due to terrain, snow, wildfire, the occasionally Sagebrush Rebellion encounter) but also challenges affecting all units related to staffing shortages, COVID-19 and sifting through the 300+ pages of protocol.

Like many modern-day conveniences (e.g., the ability to buy all necessities at the grocery store), it's easy to forget the effort involved in producing those numbers that are returned in FIA's suite of database tools. From data-collection, to information management, to analysis, to research, there is a lot of coordination and effort involved in magically returning an estimate of biomass at the county level for Doug-fir and what that means for climate change mitigation.



Figure 1: RMRS FIA field crews take a picture break while completing field training near Missoula. Field training is critical so crews can calibrate and ensure consistency when collecting FIA protocol. Photo courtesy of Dana Lambert

Many parts of the FIA program are challenging and this piece is not meant to detract from that but rather highlight all the challenges in producing those final estimates.

So, as the 2022 field season begins in the west, take a moment to recognize all of our FIA field crews and their hard work which sometimes can include long-hot (or cold) days, with hours spent collecting quality data and months of perfecting that protocol, while breathing in smoke from one of the many wildfires raging in the west or southwest, while dodging poison oak/rattlesnakes on the off-trail hike to PC, after driving an hour or so and after a 45-minute conversation with the landowner (and their guard dog) that started-out a little hostile but ended with an “access granted” and a homemade Danish to-go...only to get to PC and the Allegro crashes so guess you’re tallying on paper...true story.



Figure 2: RMRS Veg-Cover Percent Training. Photo courtesy of Dana Lambert

FIA Program Advocacy Letter Sent to Congress

“Given the increasing pressures facing our forests—climate impacts, wildfire, insects and disease, and development—the FIA program is more important now than ever before. We look forward to working with Congress and the Forest Service to significantly grow this program and ensure the accurate and timely inventory of America’s forests.” – an excerpt from the letter sent to the House and Senate Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

A letter was sent to congress on behalf of over 80 FIA supporters with a request to increase funding. This request was sent identifying FIA as critical in meeting client and stakeholder needs in their effort to address natural resource-related issues. The letter exemplified FIA’s very diverse list of supporters and their advocacy effort for the program. The full-letter can be accessed through the FIA Resource Center [here](#).

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. The SOP is a “living” document that is updated quarterly based on After Action Review feedback (garnered from participants of the process) and other updates/improvements that are recognized. The SOP can be accessed through the FIA Resource Center [here](#).

The following issues are “active” and are in various stages of the process. A new issue should be entering Phase 2 of the process soon, which issue chosen next (that is currently in the queue) will be dependent on the priority set by Program Managers and Bands.

GRM Tree Status Codes

GRM Tree Status is at the end of Phase 2 of the change management process. A group of subject matter experts (representing all units and all bands), identified via Band Leader requests for interest, participated in biweekly meetings that began in February. The team thoroughly articulated the “Problem Statement” to

promote shared understanding of the issue and then identified multiple courses-of-action (COA) to address the problem. Screening criteria were developed, and COA's had to "pass" the screening criteria in order to be considered a valid solution. An example of screening criteria included 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 remained. The remaining COA's differed in that one COA required further defining current codes and one COA required the addition of data items to ensure screening criteria could be met. At the last meeting, the team officially identified the best COA based on screening and evaluation criteria. The next step is for the recommended COA to be presented to the Program Managers for final approval (tentatively scheduled for beginning of June). If approved, Tree Status Code will move into Phase 3 of the change management process: implementation.

Phase 3 efforts will include work on behalf of DAB to create field manual language of the change and IM to code the change. All bands will be given the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the implementation of the chosen COA. Currently, Tree Status Code change is on track to be fully implemented in field guide version 9.3 effective FY24 though this could change. Please recognize your role, responsibility and the engagement required in this part of the process. Timelines for review are roughly:

Present to Bands by: **8/1/2022**

Band Approval/Feedback/Incorporated Changes by: **10/1/2022**

PM Approval/Incorporated Changes by: **11/1/2022**

Pre-Field Guide Changes Implemented: **1/1/2023**

Field Guide/Field Implemented: **9/1/2023 (1/1/2024 for RMRS & PNW)**

Though the change management process runs outside the scope of field-guide timelines, pending when the change is complete and pending effects of the change, the change may require updates to the field-guide. If so, the change will adhere to the pre-field and field guide timelines illustrated [here](#).

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](#).

Announcements & Meetings

R&D MGTAG

Dan Kaisershot (NRS FIA) and John Chase (R&D GIS Community POC, PNWRS FIA) and have coordinated to form the Research & Development Mobile Geospatial Technical Advisory Group (R&D MGTAG). The group is modeled after the national MGTAG, focusing on geospatial solutions for GPS/GNSS devices, phones, tablets, and personal (portable) data recorders. Representation is across multiple research groups from NRS, PNWRS, RMRS, SRS and IITF. R&D has been under-represented in MGTAG. We're hoping to increase interest and are inviting participation in our monthly virtual Teams meetings. Contact Dan Kaisershot for more information. Email daniel.j.kaisershot@usda.gov.

SAF FIA User Group Meeting (May 23rd-26th)

The 2022 SAF FIA User Group meeting is being held virtually this week. Presentations will cover FIA Program priorities, partnerships, accomplishments, the Resource Planning Act Assessments (and FIA's role in RPA), program elements including carbon as well as open feedback sessions where participants can ask questions and make requests concerning needs of FIA data. Follow-up notes and actions will be shared at a later date.

Science Stakeholder Meeting & Deadlines (November 15th-17th)

The 2022 Science Stakeholder meeting will take place November 15-17th and will be hosted in Minneapolis/St. Paul Minnesota (tentatively held in-person). This year's theme is "Grow. Adapt. Regenerate: Monitoring and responding to global change to promote resilient and productive forests."

Special issue abstracts were due for submission on April 30 and proposals for organized sessions were due on May 6th, but oral presentations and digital engagement demonstration abstracts will be accepted through June 10th. For more information, visit the FIA Science Stakeholder Meeting page [here](#).

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