



*Getting the Maps and FIA Data in the
Hands of the Users Workshop*
Palikir, Pohnpei March 9 – 11, 2009

The Pacific Islands Committee, a sub-committee of the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition, requested a workshop to train resource professionals and GIS specialists in using Forest Service developed vegetation maps and Forest Inventory and Analysis program data. In 2001, a partnership between the Pacific Southwest Region, State and Private Forestry staff and the Pacific Northwest Research Station, Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program was created to acquire remotely sensed data, develop lifeform and association-type vegetation data, and to collect FIA data. In 2008, vegetation maps and FIA data collection were completed on all islands, with the exception of Hawaii. The goals of the workshop were to educate, assist and build skills for GIS specialists and resource personnel in the use of the Forest Service vegetation mapping, to describe the FIA program and the data collected, and to demonstrate how local resource managers can use the data in their own work.

The workshop was a great success and was attended by 31 participants from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) state and island agencies, College of Micronesia, Conservation Society of Pohnpei, Marshall Islands Conservation Society, Chuuk Conservation Society, and Chuuk EPA. The USFS training team consisted of four individuals representing State and Private Forestry, Lisa Fischer and Zhanfeng Liu, Research, Joe Donnegan – Pacific Northwest – Forest Inventory and Analysis Program, and Katie Friday – Institute for Pacific Islands Forestry. Specific workshop

objectives included:

- Acquire or enhance GIS skills for mapping vegetation, changing projections, acquiring data, linking developed maps and updated maps
- Link FIA data to vegetation data
- Acquire or enhance GPS skills to collect data in the field, download the data to ArcGIS and use the data to update existing vegetation maps
- Generate sample SAP and explore steps to developing the Statewide Assessment
- Understand the local, national, and international context of FIA data
- Work with FIA data to become comfortable with the database
- Communicate local needs to improve data and mapped products

We achieved the planned goals and objectives, strengthened working relationships with previously known island partners, and also established new connections with potential future collaborations.

Highlights & Successes

- Excellent training teamwork
- Wide-ranging training contents/materials provided in a well organized notebook format
- Significant classroom interaction
- Constructive feedback
- Exercises worked well especially in smaller state-level work groups

Issues & Concerns

- Ensure the appropriate individuals with the right skills are in attendance
- Insufficient GIS/RS software and hardware equipment – participants must bring software to run GIS exercises and Access
- Not enough time to introduce a brand new learner to GIS – participants must have some familiarity with GIS and Access
- Local institutional support for GIS should be addressed

Future

- Improve communication in the initial skills survey and registration materials – more clearly define user skill requirements and proper software/hardware required for training.
- Keep to established goals for GIS skills development – if there is extra time then provide additional training but focus on fundamentals
- More focused and targeted selection of participants from the islands/territories
- Break out into small groups during exercises and have additional GIS training support/help
- Suggest island/territories develop a strategic plan for GIS within their agencies/organizations or partner with fully developed GIS groups
- Given that many offices and some entire islands lack fast internet connections, provide an island-specific CD with at least GIS layers from Forest Service (and NRCS if possible), and provide access to the Geonet, online database for imagery and other layers for the Pacific Islands.

Summary of Evaluations from the Workshop

There were 31 participants that engaged in the workshop exercises and small state workgroups. Each of the 31 participants completed an evaluation form. The following table summarizes the responses from the participants.

| Evaluation of Maps and Data Workshop | | | |
|---|-----|----|---|
| Questions | Yes | No | Summary of Comments |
| Did the training meet your needs? | 26 | 3 | |
| Was the material presented clearly and concisely? | 29 | | |
| Was there enough time for discussion? | 21 | 8 | Need more time for discussion and engagement from islanders |
| Was there enough time for conducting exercises? | 16 | 13 | Need more time and relevance to local projects/issues |
| Was there a good balance between lecture, exercises and discussion? | 24 | 5 | Most commented that they wanted more hands on exercises |
| Overall, did the training meet your expectations? | 27 | 2 | |

The seventh question asked how the training could be improved. More than half of the comments related to needing more time for hands-on exercise and practicing skills during the workshop. Many also commented that they would like more relevant examples discussed during the lectures and in the hands-on exercises. A few respondents want more training and would like this training to span over two weeks. Two respondents were newly introduced to GIS and thought this training was too difficult while two others would like more in-depth instruction. One respondent specifically requested more time in working with the FIA database and more time using the tool.

Overall, we met our goals and objectives for the training. This training was not intended for first time GIS or database users.

There is a lot of interest in the topic of maps, data, databases and GIS tools. In order to keep the momentum and to build on experiences gained in this workshop, two suggestions were made including developing an FSM nationwide GIS Users Group (Matthew Chigiya, FSM agreed to lead), and initiating a long-term strategy for developing GIS positions within the government agencies.

A similar workshop will be held April 27-April 30, 2009 in Palau.