

# **The Aerial Survey Working Group 2017 Charter**

**September 2017**

## **Introduction**

Aerial detection surveys are an important component of USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection (FHP) and State land management agency programs. These surveys, including sketch mapping and other forms of remote sensing, often account for a significant portion of Federal and State resources including time, personnel, and budget. Data obtained from aerial surveys identify relative extent, intensity, and locations of both biotic and abiotic forest agents-of-change and are used to identify suppression projects, locate salvage opportunities, and determine historical trends on Federal, State, and private land ownerships. State cooperators use these data to create reports to their State legislators and for continued support of their forest health programs. The US Forest Service, in turn, uses these data in a broad array of forest health and related programs, including support to the National Forest Health Monitoring Program (FHM). The extensive and comprehensive database created from Federal and State aerial survey data is one of the primary data layers for identifying disturbance patterns during landscape analyses. Some aerial survey programs have 70 or more years of aerial survey data in either digital or hard-copy form. FHP units and States previously unengaged in aerial survey have instituted or expanded survey programs to meet growing demands. FHP has the second largest aviation program in the USDA Forest Service, after firefighting. FHP and cooperators record approximately 5,000 flight hours and survey approximately 500 million acres annually.

## **The Working Group**

The Aerial Survey Working Group (ASWG) was formed in November 1996 to provide national field-level input and leadership to the Washington Office FHP Director and FHP Staff Directors as well as to provide technical assistance related to conducting or planning aerial surveys. Functioning autonomously, as an ad hoc group of forest health and aviation specialists, the ASWG provides technical input to resource professionals regarding aviation safety, survey efficiency and effectiveness. The group is sensitive to other technologies and may provide recommendations as an unbiased contributor to insect and disease surveys. Recommendations are to consider relevancy, impact, and integration of current and/or potential survey methods within the change management process to support FHP strategy while providing for program safety and mission accomplishment. The ASWG was originally chartered by FHP in March 2000 and was due for re-chartering in 2015.

## **Scope and Participation**

In accordance with policy and cooperative agreements, aerial surveys are conducted on State, private, Federal, and Tribal forested lands nationwide to meet requests from all land management agencies.

Participation includes representation from each USDA Forest Service Region/Area, States, FHP National Aviation Safety Manager and Aerial Survey Program Manager, and one FHP Staff Director who serves as liaison between ASWG and the FHP Directors and State Foresters. The FHP Staff Director member is selected by the Washington Office FHP Director. Additional participation consists of a voluntary group of interested parties including all State, Federal, and Tribal agency personnel involved with aerial surveys and remote sensing.

## **Charge**

ASWG has the following objectives:

1. To promote a positive safety culture by applying components of Safety Management Systems; helping all aerial survey programs to operate in a safe and efficient manner.
2. To aid in the development of consistent standards for aerial survey data collection of forest insect, disease, and related conditions across all lands.
3. To provide input to the FHP Washington Office, Regional and Staff Directors, Fire and Aviation Management, Forest Management, State Foresters, and State cooperators on aerial survey program issues and opportunities.
4. To broadly and cooperatively share expertise, information, and ideas.
5. To continue to improve the reliability and accuracy of the aerial survey program, data quality and standards.

## **Role of the FHP National Aviation Safety Manager and Aerial Survey Program Manager**

The FHP National Aviation Safety Manager and Aerial Survey Program Manager (FHP NASM/ADSPM) serves as permanent Chair of the ASWG and will provide advice and assistance to the Washington Office FHP Director, Area/Regional FHP staff Directors and State Foresters related to their aerial survey management and safety responsibilities. The FHP NASM/ADSPM also provides guidance and technical assistance to the ASWG on aviation safety and aerial survey and serves as a coordinator for training, certification, and standardization of FHP and State aerial surveyors. Other duties include coordinating ASWG meetings and developing agendas, preparing a committee report following each annual meeting, and maintaining mailing lists for ASWG and all certified aerial surveyors. The position also serves as a link between the ASWG, the FHM Program and the National Fire and Aviation Management Staff.

## **Duration**

The group will be empowered for five years with a review for re-chartering at the end of the fourth year or as directed by the Washington Office FHP Director.

## **Operating Guidelines**

The ASWG meets annually or as often as deemed necessary to address issues related to the group. Issues may be raised or addressed outside of the annual meeting. Venues and modes of communication beyond the annual meeting are varied including subgroups specifically tasked with ASWG action items, participants utilizing specially designed forums for communication, and conference calls to address previously determined or emergent issues.

The local representative for each meeting will serve as co-chair and establish local arrangements, help develop the agenda, and provide communication regarding local arrangements as needed.

Each group member represents their respective forest health unit or State, brings all issues and concerns to the meetings, and relays information to those they represent. Each member will provide a short annual summary of the aerial survey and remote sensing activity for their Region/Area. This summary would include information relating to technology, number of flight hours, acres flown, special surveys, training, and incidents.

The group recognizes the importance of coordinating with other sources of forest health data. As appropriate, ASWG provides recommendations as to method(s) and standards relating to the type of data collected to meet Insect and Disease Survey (IDS) needs while considering aviation safety oversight, risk management, and FHP/cooperative mission accomplishment.

The Chair will, on behalf of, and as directed by the working group, communicate to appropriate venues, all concerns, needs, and recommendations of the ASWG and represent the working group at meetings as appropriate.

## **The Annual Aerial Survey Working Group Report**

ASWG will submit an annual report to the FHP Staff Directors after completion of their annual meeting. This report will include a summary of each meeting's activities, recommendations to management, and is sent to the Directors prior to their spring FHP Directors Meeting.

## **Activities**

ASWG activities include supporting a national training course "Aerial Survey Aviation Safety and Management" (AS2M), evaluation of new technologies and conducting pre-season training and calibration workshops for aerial survey personnel and supervisors. These activities help ensure safe, efficient, and effective aerial survey programs.

**I concur with the Re-chartering of the Aerial Survey Working Group:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Washington Office FHP Director

Date:

**Regional/Area Directors/Deputies, State and Private Forestry/Forest Health Protection:**

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Regions 1 and 4

Date:

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Region 2

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Region 10

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Northeastern Area

Date:

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International Institute of Tropical Forestry

Date: