



RMRS INTERIOR WEST NEWSLETTER

VOL. 1 – JUNE 2015



A photo of Antelope Canyon, AZ, taken by Peter Conklin during helicopter operations in June.

PROGRAM MANAGER’S NOTE

Welcome to our FIRST RMRS Interior West newsletter! I know you receive a LOT of communication (probably too much!), yet we’ve also heard you DO want to know about what’s going in the Program. So, this year we are going to put together a quarterly newsletter coordinated by Eric Volkman (Deputy Program Manager). We hope you will let us know what you think, make suggestions or requests for information and stories, and even provide us with some of your own.

We haven’t come up with a catchy name, but the idea is to provide our staff, as well as our partners, with some meaningful information in a concise format. We’ve heard that some of you want to know:

- what’s happening in the field around the Interior West States (challenges, accomplishments);
- a little about some of the staff who work in the Program;
- what it is we actually do in FIA or RMRS research;
- how the data are being used by analysts and partners (with links for more info);
- how the field work, compilation, and State reporting are progressing;
- what new things we are exploring to help our business and our clients;
- what lies ahead for the Program; and
- what exciting experiences our staff might be willing to share (and hopefully with links to YouTube or elsewhere).

Please peruse this first edition and let Eric, or me, know if this is meaningful, tell us what you’d like to see, and offer up contributions if you will.

Thanks.

— *Michael Wilson*



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TEAM UPDATES

ANALYSIS TEAM

- The Analysis Team hosted the Colorado State crews for an analysis workshop in February. The workshop covered the use of data and tools available on the FIA Datamart. There was also a lot of discussion about how issues observed in the field might be addressed by data analysis. The Colorado crews are interested in potential analyses that can be done in the off-season.
- In March, Sara Goeking traveled to Douala, Cameroon, to participate in a workshop to define the objectives and parameters of Cameroon's national forest monitoring system. Sara and other Forest Service forest monitoring specialists presented technical information and facilitated discussions among workshop participants, including representatives of Cameroon's Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development, academic institutions, and non-governmental and civil organizations.
- John Shaw recently attended the annual meeting of the Forest Vegetation Simulator (FVS) Steering Team in Ft. Collins, CO. FVS is the standard tool for projecting forest growth and treatment options within the Forest Service, and it is used by a wide variety of other users. The IW-FIA program has strategic partnership with the FVS program with the goal of adding value to both programs. Models within FVS can be developed or validated using FIA data, and FVS can be used to project FIA estimates into the future. An important upcoming project will use FIA seeding and understory vegetation data to improve the simulation of forest regeneration.
- The Analysis Team is currently working on reports for the states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, and Utah.
- Planning mini-trainings in PP 10 in Missoula, McCall, and Kanab: Safety Engagement #3, I & D trainings, etc...
- Hiring: Many non-competitive 1039 rehire positions have been filled. Vacancies announcements for temporary and permanent crew member positions were advertised on USAJOBS. They're closed now and we're awaiting referral lists so we can begin hiring.
- Field season 2105: The workload shifts around a bit between states with the randomness of the 10% grid, but the total number of plots, and 'special projects' is almost a duplicate of 2014 season.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT TEAM

- The following RMRS applications have passed architecture review for the VDC migration and are on track for deployment to the new data center: RMRS Photo Application (for plots), RMRS Forms and Support Applications (Fleet, Budget, Employee, etc...) and RMRS Crew Check-In web pages.
- New updates/features being added to the national prefield plot editor gps coordinate corrections.
- RMRS has begun implementation of the new Protocol Plot Design (PPD) module for NIMS-CS which will allow units to include meta data about measurement data.
- Data Processing – Annual inventory data for the following states (up to INVYR=2014) have been loaded to FS_NIMS_FIADB_RMRS and are currently out for review: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming.
- DPS reports – The 2014 Data Processing Summary (DPS) reports for the following states have been completed and are available at the IM SharePoint site (<https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/fs-rmrs-fiain/SitePages/Home.aspx>) and the O Drive (O:\RD\RMRS\Science\IM\Collaboration\Data_Processing_Summary_Reports): Arizona, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming.

DATA COLLECTION TEAM

- Wrapping up winter work projects: 27 people (including perm staff but not AL's) worked on 13 different projects for Analyst (mostly), Techniques, IM, Safety, Prefield teams/groups.
- Prepping for field: Have started fieldwork in more southern states, includes some people from north who have come down to help. Soon to begin in others.

TEAM UPDATES

TECHNIQUES TEAM

- Todd Schroeder's recent publication on combining FIA data with observation from Landsat time series for better disturbance estimates was featured on NASA's Landsat website: <http://landsat.gsfc.nasa.gov/?p=9513>
- At the request of FAO and International Programs, Tracey Frescino and Paul Patterson visited Rome, Guatemala and Knoxville to train Peruvian forest inventory specialists as well as learn Open Foris software which offers new potential for FIA and is important for many international activities.
- Sean Healey orchestrated the inclusion of numerous premier Landsat change detection algorithms into Google Earth Engine for use in the multi-agency Landscape Change Monitoring System.
- Gretchen Moisen spent a week with statisticians gathered at the National Institute of Applied Statistics Research Australia, expanding our estimation and modeling toolkits.
- Karen Schleeweis helped launch a new NASA-funded project led by Cheng Huang at the University of MD studying the role of forest disturbance and regrowth in the US carbon budget.
- Liz Freeman incorporated new tools and diagnostics into her increasingly popular ModelMap package built in R statistical software.
- In addition to his job with Landfire, Chris Toney has been working with partners at NASA's Earth Exchange, a super computing facility in California, to optimize nationwide modeling and mapping of forest disturbance causal agent.
- Sean Healey and former post-doc Crystal Raymond just completed a study that showed root disease to have a bigger impact on carbon storage than fire in selected Northern Region national forests.
- Gretchen Moisen, Todd Schroeder, and Karen Schleeweis participated in the kick-off of a new NASA funded project (led by Chris Williams at Clark University) translating forest change to carbon emissions by linking disturbance products, biomass maps, and carbon cycle modeling across the US.
- Ray Czaplewski recently submitted a manuscript to the journal Sensors, presenting his new Kalman Filter algorithm for improving annual estimates of tree mortality in Colorado.
- Gretchen Moisen, Paul Patterson and Tracey Frescino, and partners at Colorado State University and RSAC kicked off the "Stack, Sync, and Ice" project, combining both field and remotely sensed information collected by field experts for improved annual estimates of forest attributes in Utah.
- Jock Blackard moved on to Region 4 where he assumed the position as the new Vegetation Inventory Analyst. Although he'll be missed, we've gained an exceptional new partner in the Region.



A photo of Tower Butte, AZ, taken by Peter Conklin during helicopter operations in June.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

As noted in the Techniques Team update, Jock Blackard recently left the FIA family to move down the street to R4. Before Jock left, I asked him to be the first focus of a newsletter piece I hope is interesting to many. In each newsletter I am going to highlight a staff position and a single person in that position. I hope to let you know more about the different jobs inside the program, and also a little more about the individuals who do those jobs. Below is what Jock Blackard had to say about his job and himself. —Eric Volkman

JOCK BLACKARD

Forester/GIS Analyst
Techniques Research team
Ogden, UT

I have worked for the IW-FIA Program for ten years as a Forester/GIS Analyst. Part of my duties have been directing overall GIS/Remote Sensing activities for the IW-FIA office; which include assisting in the continued development of the GIS spatial library, participating in data migration activities related to spatial data, and administration of the IW-FIA Network Attached Storage (NAS) device.

I also work with the Techniques Research team, and have provided GIS analysis and support for various research efforts over the years; including national forest change detection analysis, the FIA national forest biomass map, core forest attribute maps across the IW-FIA region, and plot intensification designs for selected RMRS EF&R areas.

In addition, I am the IW-FIA Spatial Data Services (SDS) representative, who is responsible for fielding and completing spatial data requests, providing support to various user questions, representing IW-FIA in national data request issues, and assuring compliance with security concerns related to confidential data. As part of these duties, I have worked closely with corresponding members of the national SDS team as well as a wide assortment of FIA clients needing assistance in either utilizing FIA data or potentially obtaining confidential FIA data for specific research projects.

This position also serves on various task teams when needed. For example, I led the Techniques Research band's Plot Intensification Team for two years, which was a national task team created to explore and recommend a national FIA plot intensification methodology. I was also asked to lead IW-FIA's portion in compiling the annual FIA Business Report for FY14. Furthermore, this position represents the IW-FIA during monthly R&D GIS POC conference calls, and may rotate time as a representative on the R4/RMRS Safety Committee, or other similar teams.

Prior to FIA, my related work experience includes employment with the USFS Inventory & Monitoring Institute (Ft. Collins, CO), US Army Corps of Engineers (Fort Worth, TX), and the Colorado State Forest Service (Salida, CO). I attended Stephen F. Austin State University (TX) for a BS and MS in Forestry, as well as Colorado State University for a Ph.D. in Forest Sciences (GIS/Remote Sensing emphasis). I live in Ogden with my wife and two sons, where we enjoy getting out and exploring wide open spaces.

Profile: <http://www.fs.fed.us/research/people/profile.php?alias=jblackard>

