2019 FIA Users’ Group Meeting

Summary / Action Items

- **Protect and strengthen the core**: We are about 20 years into annual inventory and are seeing a wide range of benefits from a well-designed and consistently implemented program. While budget fluctuations may continue to challenge our ability to keep the inventory current, the primary focus of the FIA program should be on protecting and strengthening the three legs of the core program: field inventory, timber products monitoring, and national ownership surveys.

- **Small area estimation**: Estimates of forest conditions for small geographic areas and/or domains is important to a wide array of users. Multiple initiatives are underway, and some experiments have been conducted. Users would benefit from broader dissemination of results and status of efforts, especially regarding methods with potential for broad-scale application. The FIA Stakeholder Science meeting might be a good opportunity for this. Users eagerly seek more research and development in this area.

- **Land use and land cover change**: Reliable information on rates of forest cover/use change in the US is crucial. Results from Image-based Change Estimation (ICE) work in several states including California and Georgia are encouraging. There is strong user support for 3-year (approx.) remeasurement of forest area change with data made available to users. FIA should also consider spatial intensification of ICE samples to provide more precise information to users in geographic areas undergoing rapid change; a pilot test of the costs and benefits of such intensification would be welcomed.

- **Data dissemination**: In keeping with the Open Government Data act, users expressed interest in having access to machine-readable, readily downloadable data for the Biomass/Tree Taper project, ICE, TPO, and NWOS (given appropriate synthesis or aggregation to meet privacy concerns).

- **National Woodland Owner Survey**: Results from the NWOS and corporate owner survey have wide-ranging impact. To help disseminate information about these programs to interested parties, and to provide opportunities for questions and input from stakeholders, a committee or stakeholder event should be convened.

- **Urban forest inventory**: Progress has been made in implementing urban forest inventory in more areas, but ongoing success will be dependent on delivery of data and reports in a timely manner. This program depends on strong partner support, which is weakened when delivery of results to partners and to the public is delayed.

- **Regeneration**: The status of forest regeneration is of wide concern, both in terms of knowing what proportion of harvested acres are regenerated to forest (including rates of tree planting), and in knowing the composition of newly established forests (e.g., oak regeneration). Users urge FIA to consider ways in which the program might provide such information on a broad scale in a timely manner.

- **Delivering data in a consumable format**: Users applaud the efforts and partnerships designed to enhance the reach of FIA data and information products to a broad non-technical audience. Impressive results have stimulated demand for even more innovation in this area.

- **Rapid assessment methodology**: Hurricane damage assessments remind us that natural disturbances are a certainty, and FIA is in a unique position to provide crucial information afterwards. Users encourage FIA to synthesize experience in post-disaster assessments in the development of best practices or standard methods for rapid assessments.