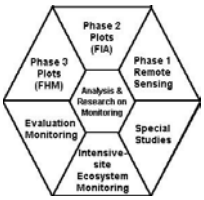
Forest Inventory and Analysis Organizational Structure

FIA **Fact Sheet Series** FHM



Former Organizational Structure. The previous USDA Forest Service forest inventory and analysis organizational structure consisted of three major components:

- Five Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) units located at research Stations, responsible for forest inventories at a strategic level on all US forest lands except National Forests (609 million acres);

- Nine inventory staffs in National Forest System (NFS) Regions, responsible for forest inventories at both the strategic and tactical levels (e.g., specific plans and projects) on the 139 million acres of forest land that is part of the NFS (total land ownership is 190 million acres) and for monitoring the effects of plans and projects as they are implemented on National Forests; and

- Five regional FHM programs led by USDA Forest Service Research and Development, responsible for detection monitoring on both public and private forest in all States.

- In addition, one BLM State Office (Oregon) that inventories 3.2 million acres of forest land. (Note: BLM land outside Oregon is inventoried by FIA units.)

This organization structure allowed each entity maximum flexibility to address local inventory needs, at the expense of maintaining consistency in inventory approaches across different administrative units. Differences in approaches led to cases where no data were available for some National Forests. There was some duplication of efforts, as well as inconsistency, between FIA and FHM. There was not any mechanism for making decisions to assure consistency regarding methods, standards, and definitions within FIA, or between FIA, FHM, and NFS.

Stakeholders outside the agency had two major criticisms of the previous organizational structure. Although they saw much funding allocated to inventory and monitoring, they were dissatisfied with the relatively small portion devoted to strategic level FIA inventories that are their top priority. They also did not understand why the USDA Forest Service could not achieve more consistency in data across administrative boundaries.

New Organizational Structure. Three fundamental changes were initiated to respond to the legislative mandate and the Second Blue Ribbon Panel Report recommendations to restructure USDA Forest Service inventory and monitoring programs.

<u>Reassign Responsibilities and Funding for Strategic Inventories on National Forests to the FIA Units.</u>

The expanded FIA program will be formally given the responsibility and the necessary resources to implement the base FIA program across NFS lands. This change in policy and funding will allow the swift transition to annualized inventories across all land ownership categories throughout the US in a consistent fashion. In addition, FIA will collaborate with National Forests to augment the base program, as needed, to address regional or local National Forest issues, using additional National Forest resources. The outcome of this change will be State reports that include consistent data of the same vintage for National Forests as for private lands and analytical results and trends that are fully and directly comparable across regions and landownership categories.

<u>Integrate FIA and FHM to Create a new FIA.</u>

The field plot portion of the FHM detection monitoring program will be integrated with the FIA program to create a single program that gathers a wide array of ecological data in an efficient fashion. This will be accomplished by collecting an extended suite of ecological measurements on a subset of FIA plots each year. Management and support functions will be consolidated into a single program, which will maintain close ties with other FHM program components. The outcome of this change will be increased efficiency and more and better ecological information collected.

<u>Create an FIA Organizational Structure that reflects the diversity of partners.</u>

Successful implementation of the FIA program requires close collaboration among many partners who provide resources to deliver program outcomes. These partners include three branches of the Forest Service – Research and Development, National Forest Systems, and State and Private Forestry – as well as State Forestry organizations represented by the National Association of State Foresters. FIA has created an organizational structure that consists of the following elements:

1. Executive Team – Comprised of Forest Service senior executives and State Foresters, to provide the broad oversight for policy issues

2. Management Team – Comprised of FIA program managers and other partners who make decisions regarding FIA program elements of national concern.

3. Technical Bands – Comprised of groups of individuals with expertise in various technical areas who are responsible for developing methods and approaches needed to implement the FIA program.

4. Regional Management Teams – Comprised of representatives in each of the five FIA geographical regions involved in the day-to-day task of developing regional enhancements to the national FIA program and in implementing the FIA program within their respective region.

5. User Groups – Comprised of a broad array of FIA program customers including state and other government organizations, researchers, industry, environmental organizations, and others who use FIA information. User groups exist for each regional program as well as for the national program, and provide valuable feedback for improving the FIA program.

Additional Staff. The core of the expanded FIA program staff will come from existing FIA and FHM staff. In order to meet the legislative mandate, additional staff will be needed in a number of areas.

The USDA Forest Service has extensive experience leading research and development programs involving partnerships with universities. The additional analyses required by customers will be accomplished most effectively if the talents of USDA Forest Service researchers outside of existing FIA and FHM units are combined with the talents of university faculty, graduate students, and other partners.

The use of contractors to assist in the various aspects of the FIA program is being evaluated. In recent years, commercial forestry consultants and contractors have conducted some inventory field work for National Forests, Stations, and States. FIA units have also used contractors to provide specialized services. Where contractors are more cost-efficient and can meet the same quality and timeliness standards as USDA Forest Service crews, they will be used.

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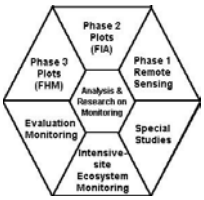

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