



LANDFIRE

LESSONS LEARNED: Issue 3

LANDFIRE Reference Modeling Workshops Underway

Nearly 40 ecologists, fire managers, and researchers from the USFS, BLM, BIA, FWS, NPS, TNC, and the Universities of Wyoming, Colorado, and Arizona convened in Albuquerque October 25-29, 2004 to grapple with LANDFIRE vegetation reference modeling for the Southwest United States (see box at right). The LANDFIRE Rapid Assessment will map and model potential natural vegetation, historic fire regimes, and Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) for the nation. The national Rapid Assessment FRCC map will be completed in the summer of 2005 and applied to regional strategic planning, broad ecological assessments, and resource allocation.

Staff from the USDA Forest Service Missoula Fire Services Lab and The Nature Conservancy, facilitated the weeklong workshop, which was one of eleven scheduled across the US through spring 2005.

Context and Action

Wendel Hann, USDA Forest Service FRCC Lead, led with an overview of the history and mandate for LANDFIRE and FRCC, including fulfillment of criteria relative to the National Fire Plan and the implementation of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (see www.landfire.gov). Jim Menakis, USFS Rapid Missoula Fire Services Lab, explained the LANDFIRE Rapid Assessment and FRCC Guidebook administrative structure, methodology, scale and resolution, how the projects link together, and where the workshop products fit in.

Kelly Pohl and Ayn Shlisky of The Nature Conservancy instructed participants on the intricacies of the Vegetation Dynamics Development Tool (VDDT; Beukema et al. 2003), the public-domain, state-and-transition model that provides a framework for quantifying the rate and effects of succession and disturbance within a potential natural vegetation type (PNVG). Then participants flipped open their laptops and devoted the rest of the week to developing reference models for each PNVG in the Southwest region.

Collaboration is Key

Significant at this workshop was the high degree of inter-agency and science-management collaboration, expansion of dialogue regarding the process of mapping across regions, and the excitement of being on the “tip of the spear,” according to one participant, in a national program that has changed the vocabulary of the discipline of mapping fire regimes.

LANDFIRE is a wildland fire, ecosystem, and fuel assessment-mapping project designed to generate consistent, comprehensive, landscape-scale maps of vegetation, fire, and fuel characteristics for the United States. It responds to agency and partner needs for data to support fire management planning, prioritization of fuel treatments, collaboration, community and firefighter protection and effective resource allocation. It is a collaborative \$40 million 5-year partnership between the USDA Forest Service, Department of the Interior and The Nature Conservancy. For more information, please visit www.landfire.gov.

Among the Lessons Learned:

- Pre-workshop preparation is key to incorporation of the best available information into each model.
- Splitters and lumpers can effectively work together to ensure that model resolution is effective toward project goals.
- As more than one participant said, “Regional specialists and line officers need to be exposed to most of these materials.” It would be great to see more line officers at the workshops.
- Noted another participant, “The workshops set a good, collaborative spirit. Very friendly atmosphere. We did have fun.”
- The in-workshop model review process is a valuable tool to hone modeling skills and improve model content.
- Wall-to-wall Rapid Assessment and LANDFIRE data does not preclude the use of finer local data. Local and LANDFIRE staff need to work together to link data for multi-scale applications.
- Working at the interface of science and management is difficult but critical to the effective interpretation of research results for management application and the design of relevant research.

When completed, the models developed in Albuquerque will be reviewed and incorporated, when applicable, into other regions via expert workshops for the rest of the Western US. Ultimately, models developed here and elsewhere will be refined, reviewed by a broader group of experts, and used for finer resolution LANDFIRE mapping.

Are you a lumper or a splitter? Take our exam on the web at www.landfire.gov.*

67 Participants trained in VDDT modeling to date

66 models drafted to date (November '04)

72 partners, engaged agencies and operating units

*In Albuquerque, 68% of attendees began as splitters; 21% started as lumpers; and 11% couldn't decide.

For more information:

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