



A Wilderness Manager's Guide to Forest Inventory and Analysis

Intro to FIA – Forestry Inventory and Analysis (FIA) is the national program for collecting and reporting information on status and trends in forested ecosystems across all ownerships. FIA is managed by the Forest Service's Research and Development Staff. Each plot represents 6,000 acres (3 mile x 3 mile grid). Permanent plots in each state are revisited on a 5-10 year cycle (10-20% sampled each year per state). Data collected is not strictly timber related. Data is also collected on forest health, vegetation diversity, down woody debris, transition of land use etc... No destructive sampling is used during data gathering.

In October 2009, a Servicewide Agreement (09-SA-FIA01) was signed between the National Forest System and Forest Inventory and Analysis to provide a general framework for coordination including, among other items, FIA operations in wilderness. The agreement is in effect until 10/1/2015. This agreement can be found on the National & Regional Wilderness Program Manager's Webpage: http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/rhwr/wilderness/rws/documents/fia_sa.pdf Please note: this guide is not a substitute for the agreement. All local FIA local contacts with plots in wilderness and wilderness managers should familiarize themselves with the entire agreement.

Some of the topics listed below will provide a tickler list for wilderness managers to think about when contacted by FIA crews working in wilderness.

Agreement Requirements

- FIA staffs are required to contact the local NFS contact as appropriate in order to establish reasonable and effective working conditions prior to entry.
- Your local FIA contact is typically someone in the Forest vegetation/ecology shop. Build a relationship with that person to make sure you are notified. Provide them with a copy of the agreement, if they don't already have it. If you are unable to identify your local contact, get in touch with the Regional FIA Program and they will be able to provide you with the appropriate name (<http://www.fia.fs.fed.us/regional-offices/>).
- NFS staffs are required to furnish the appropriate FIA Unit with information on the names, titles, and phone numbers for local NFS contacts at the Forest and/or District level, including appropriate Wilderness Managers as well as any local or seasonal restrictions or hazards existing on the Forest.
- The Lead Wilderness Data Stewards list has been provided to FIA as an initial point-of-contact for each wilderness area. If the data steward isn't the wilderness manager, make sure the data steward forwards all information to the appropriate wilderness program contact.
- Discuss plot monumentation requirements including the placement of tags and nails and location of subplot centers and reference/witness trees.

Health and Safety

In order to ensure proper safety training for FIA field crews:

- All FIA units will comply with the requirements in the Forest Service Safety and Health Manual, FSH-6709.11, and the Driver-Operator Guide, EM-7130-2, including thorough Job Hazard Analyses and associated training requirements.

- In general, all applicable safety trainings required of local NFS field-going, non-fire employees will be required of FIA field crews working on that specific NFS unit (safety issues specific to your wilderness). FIA usually requires similar safety trainings of field going personnel. However, if additional training is required by the respective National Forest, this information should be communicated to the local FIA crew so they may complete the training prior to the field visit.
- Each FIA unit will have crew tracking and status procedures (check in/check out), and local NFS managers will be provided information on contacting the appropriate people in FIA to quickly determine the location and status of FIA field crews working on NFS lands, if situations requiring crew contact and/or evacuation arise (see Communications). Local NFS managers may require coordination of FIA crew check in/check out with similar local NFS procedures.

Access and Current Conditions

- Discuss access concerns and difficulties (e.g. bridge is out, trail not logged out, fire closures).
- Discuss timing of plots – share weather/snow/high water access concerns.
- Motorized/mechanized access is not authorized to get to plots.
- Identify where plots are relative to the wilderness boundary – ensure crew knows when they are in wilderness.

Wilderness Ethics/special requirements for working in wilderness

- Review Leave No Trace expectations, basic wilderness behavior/ethic, specific camping issues/regulations (e.g. campfire restrictions, stock restrictions, group size, etc.)
- Provide some suggestions on how to explain the role of FIA inventory to recreating public in wilderness.
- What can we do to help you to facilitate your inventory with a minimal impact to wilderness?

Benefits to Wilderness Managers from FIA

- FIA data are relevant for areas as small as 200,000 acres. An area this size will on average include about 33 ground plots, which is a sufficiently large sample size to estimate - with known precision - basic parameters such as the average structure, composition, growth, and mortality for the forest in question.
- Ecosystem data may be used for assessing wilderness character relative to the natural component at a regional scale and to compare conditions in wilderness with other lands.
- It is recognized that NFS may elect to leverage the value of FIA inventory products by coordinating other inventories (e.g. inventories designed and implemented for broad scale assessments, land management planning, or other objectives associated with managing resources) conducted on NFS lands with FIA sampling design, methods and schedules. When regional NFS establishes an intensified sample (e.g. CVS), it would be beneficial to communicate the difference in monumentation procedures to each field crew (NFS and FIA). Monumentation protocols for NFS crews and FIA crews are often different which can introduce confusion when trying to relocate each plot.

Those interested in learning more about the FIA Program are encouraged to visit

<http://www.fia.fs.fed.us/>