

Abstract template for the conference “A century of national forest inventories – informing past, present and future decisions”

Dear author. This is a two-page template that in the first page will ask for information on presenter name, topic, and preferred presentation form.

On page two, you are asked to fill in your abstract in the format and font size indicated. Please remember to include authors affiliation information in the footer section of page two. The length of the abstract may not be more than one page including references.

Abstract title:		NFI in the USA: Development of the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program
Take-home message:		<i>Collaborating with the user community for NFI information can greatly strengthen an NFI program’s credibility, capacity, and value to society. Although an impeccable, cutting-edge, research foundation is necessary, that alone is insufficient. NFI program success often depends more on collaborative relationships with the user community, who are really the ones that determine an NFI’s social value to a country and advocate for the NFI program.</i>
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Presenter contact info:		guldin@safnet.org
General topic, see website: <small>(please double click on the check box and activate the relevant one)</small>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Improving future NFIs by learning from the past
	<input type="checkbox"/>	NFIs today and in the future
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cutting edge and futuristic inventory techniques and technologies
Preferred presentation form:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Oral presentation
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poster
<i>Abstracts will be reviewed by members of our scientific committee and you will be given information on decisions in due time after the submission deadline has passed.</i>		

NFI in the USA: Development of the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program

Richard W. Guldin¹ and W. Brad Smith²

Introduction: Forest inventories in the United States began through decennial censuses in 1830. By the early 1870s, concerns about the depletion of U.S. forests—evident in the census data—led to the first analyses of forest conditions by government officials. Public presentations of analytical findings mobilized public sentiment for legislative action that created a new federal office to propose solutions. From the 1880s to 1910, further private sector advocacy combined with focused federal leadership led to creation of “national forests” and expanded federal missions to conduct research and assist private forest landowners in improving management of their forests. Over the past century, FIA program advances have always occurred along two intertwined pathways—advances based on scientific research and advances arising from client and stakeholder advocacy and support. When either of these have slackened, the FIA program has experienced difficulties fulfilling its mission. During the 1970s-1990s, rapid research advances in new inventory techniques were not paired with stronger attention on evolving stakeholder needs. The result was erosion in support and capacity and demands for wholesale revision of the FIA program (AF&PA 1998, LaBau et al 2007). It wasn’t until broader and deeper client and stakeholder support was obtained that major program transformation and increased capacity occurred. Synergy between these two pathways has been critical to major FIA program advances the past 20 years (Guldin et al 2013). Neither alone would have sufficed. Over the last two decades, the FIA program metamorphosed into a rigorously scientific NFI program for the 21st century that meets a broader array of information needs for a more diverse clientele; hence has greater public value and political support.

Materials and methods: Historical public records, and our personal experiences working regionally, nationally, and internationally form the basis for our presentation.

Results: The programmatic transformation and increased focus on serving the information needs of a diverse array of users has led to a highly credible, well-funded, NFI program. FIA program experts have helped other countries, such as Mexico, Argentina, and Chile, create modern NFIs and provided technical assistance to many others. FIA experts on UN-FAO global forest resource assessment teams and ECE committees and the Montréal Process Working Group on SFM have shared the lessons learned in the U.S. thereby contributing to better global inventory programs, indicators, and reporting capacities.

Conclusion: Leadership attention to meeting client and stakeholder information needs and fostering mutually beneficial partnerships is as vital to a healthy NFI program as cutting-edge research. Responsiveness to user community information needs has been essential to FIA program success and its value to society, perhaps even more so than implementing new technological advances.

References:

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Guldin, R.W., Perry, C.H., Wilson, B.T., Brewer, C.K. 2013. Creating value from America’s forest census. Keynote pres. ESRI Forestry GIS Conference. March 28, 2013. Riverside, California.

LaBau, V.J., Bones, J.T., Kingsley, N.P., Lund, H.G., Smith, W.B. 2007. A history of the forest survey in the United States: 1830-2004. FS-877. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 87 p.

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