

Summary of Interagency Information Cooperative Meetings

Introduction:

The Minnesota legislature has transferred the [Interagency Information Cooperative \(IIC\)](#) from the Department of Natural Resources to the University of Minnesota. The IIC was created in the late 1990s to enhance the access and use of forest resources data in Minnesota. In taking on this responsibility, the University of Minnesota is seeking to update, expand, and improve databases and information that the IIC can provide. As a first part of this effort, the ICC convened scientists, resource analysts, and key stakeholders and user groups to identify priorities and forest information needs for the IIC.

1st Scientist / Analyst Meeting, Green Hall, University of Minnesota, March 15, 2005

The first in a series of three meetings to review and update the Interagency Information Cooperative web site began with an introduction from the IIC Director, Alan Ek followed by an extensive overview of existing information and data from Technical Director, Tom Burk. Since the IIC's beginning, data and information on the Web site has been described in four categories according to the 1997 Needs Assessment report:

- Natural resources info
- Management info
- Cultural info
- Analysis info

In short, the website has a broad coverage and it's data and information are outdated. To make the IIC more relevant and vital to its user community, there are several new issues that need addressed. Those highlighted in the meeting included:

- How agencies' access to data have changed
- Data privacy and values
- Significantly more interest in analysis tools
- New types of data – ex. High resolution satellite imagery
- How the IIC can support environmental review process
- How does the IIC's role link to the Data Deli and FORIST and others

Meeting attendants contributed what they believe the IIC should be and provide with respect to these issues and the four categories listed above:

Natural Resources info

- Spatially explicit land cover and land use data updated frequently.
- Update common format data (GIS data) but maintain more of individual species and volume data.
- Develop growth and yield data in easily accessible format (tables, formulas) for both even and uneven-aged management and document uncertainties and assumptions.

Resource Management info

- Cover type change/conversion (from old and high risk stands to other type).

- Concentrate intensive management to high productive site by species (first to identify these sites).
- Evaluate impacts of alternative rotation age (normal and extended rotation ages).

Cultural info

- One of the largest issues today is the change of forestland ownership. Common data format from counties of NIPF ownership is not reality today, but would be really helpful in tackling the challenges of development and fragmentation of MN's forestland.
- A "complete" characterization of the natural resources, human population and infrastructure, etc. of several well defined geographic areas that illustrate empirical relationships between biophysical characteristics and other quantities of interest.
- Social-economic, data on recreation, forestry mining.

Analysis tools

- More info on models, capabilities, and interpretation for Forest Wildlife habitat analysis...Crucial to forest development, assessing impacts of change, and conflict resolution.
- Focus on developing a tool that uses existing GIS and tabular data. Only layers that have information for the entire state should be used. If, for example, data exists for the Chippewa but not Superior National Forest, do not include in this new tool.
- Make this tool extensible.

Other

- IIC reporting on data needs, information needs, model needs – to help drive better data/tools development.
- Expert/group capability to assess EIS scoping information needs and aid understanding of available data and limitations of data. Also, charter some definitive reports on big picture issues, e.g.,
 - Climate change impacts on forest
 - Insect and disease issues and adaptations for the future
 - Strategies for environmental review
- Periodic formal query to determine the information needs of resource managers and their decision makers.

2nd Scientist / Analyst Meeting, Cloquet Forestry Center, Cloquet, MN, March 24, 2005

The second meeting with scientists and analysts began with an overview of the IIC and touched on issues such as the IIC's attempt to display a wide range of data and information, broken links to data, and out-of-date focus and information.

The meeting proceeded to focus on the role of the IIC and revisited its needs assessment. Some of the requests included:

- Need for digitized soil maps
- Integration of data across ownerships
- Planning and operation level needs
- Site level ecosystem classification: tools, maps, polygons, reliable data
- Help overcome problem of getting USFS data (FIA)
- Land use update

Based on this discussion and again, with respect to the four organizational categories from the needs assessment, meeting attendants contributed what they believe the IIC should be and provide:

Natural Resources info

- Habitat by animal species, location, and distribution.
- Historical wetland coverage statewide.
- Access to MN DNR Div. Of Eco Services Invasive/Exotic species database (in the development phase?) via IIC.
- Spatial inventory technologies for better landscape info across ownerships.

Resource Management info

- Promote consistent data organization/storage between agencies, e.g., Ecological classification systems.
- Information on stand-level investment options (mgmt) to help support forest planning. Emphasize collaborative aspects to share broadly across stakeholder groups. A good "prescription writer" to help generate a good range of plausible mgmt actions.
- Develop information on opportunities and concerns surrounding woody biomass for energy production.

Cultural info

- Tribal traditional activity areas (may be beyond reservation boundaries).
- Biomass energy facilities and resource areas (woodbaskets).
- A repository of information/data on the social/economic impacts/aspects of natural resources management (forestry, water, wildlife, etc).

Analysis tools

- Models or projection of forest changes anticipated in future may be result of: management practices, development pressures, wildlife, global change (invasive species, climate, disease).
- Technical support of analysis and planning to help public land management agencies utilize new analytical tools.
- Ecosystem modeling framework for consistency across agencies/entities.

Other

- New technology – it would be helpful to have a local resource that has tested and evaluated new natural resource-based hardware and software.
- Explore opportunities for collaborative planning across public land management agencies.
- Information on consequences of emerging issues: gypsy moth on north shore, earthworm effects on diversity and productivity, climate change, TIMO and land use change.

3rd Stakeholders and Users Meeting, Blandin Foundation, Grand Rapids, MN, July, 26 2005

The third meeting with stakeholders and users began with an introduction from Jim Hoolihan, President of the Blandin Foundation and Bernadine Joselyn, Policy Director-Vital Forests/Vital Communities, Blandin Foundation. This was followed by an introduction from Susan Stafford, Dean of the College of Natural Resources, University of Minnesota and Alan Ek, Director of the Interagency Information Cooperative.

The meeting provided an overview of existing information and data on the Interagency Information Cooperative Web site, noting the strong correlation between the 1997 needs assessment and the current inventory of links on the IIC Web Site, which include FIA data, forest inventory common format, physical resource data, ecosystem classification system, cultural information and land use classifications. One area missing from this list of links is tools to analyze data.

Discussion focused on change in data over the last 15 years from being protected to exploiting means to widely deliver data (e.g., via the WWW). There was a collective agreement in the need to provide commonality in data access and analysis tools.

Based on this discussion and again, with respect to the four organizational categories from the needs assessment, meeting attendants contributed what they believe the IIC should be and provide.

Natural Resources info

- Land cover trends – spatial, age, patch size, composition. Land ownership trends – parcelization, turn over.
- Continue work to encourage common data formats
- Evaluate currently available modeling tools for answering today's/tomorrow's natural resource management questions. E.g., how well does STEMS work for sorts of uneven and residual basal area management that will become increasingly common.
- Monitoring is so expensive and yet stipulated for more and more areas. There's a need (maybe way beyond IIC's capability) to encourage consistency in monitoring data to be able to compare / leverage. E.g., – MFRC's guideline monitoring and certification monitoring both produce public information.

Resource Management info

- Agency management plans –especially countries. Should be posted and annually updated with an 'annual report' of accomplishments compared with the plan (public accountability)
- Gather more information about what is being done on NIPF land with regard to stewardship planning, conservation easements, and certification. For example, location of tracts, forest/cover types affected, special sites protected, source of certified wood, etc.

- Land cover impact on water quality. Also forest fragmentation, development, pervious surfaces
- Opportunities for marginal agricultural lands in natural resource perspectives.

Cultural info

- Need a better universal data source for land ownership change, in order to understand the scope of parcelization.
- Approaches for combining demographic and ownership data with natural resource data.
- Issue - invite/include tribal groups. Role: Facilitate their interaction or information gathering/sharing/utilizing. Need: Tribal forest managers could provide some unique aspects to this information network.
- Issue: Education for NIPF. Role: Market the information, both data and analysis, to NIPFS and educators. Need: To package in a way non-professionals can use.
- Facilitate linkage of FIA data and prediction/projection models relevant to the data.

Analysis tools

- There is a need for common reporting platforms in a number of different areas, i.e., landscape, level, GIS, stand level.
- FIA needs to make their data more useful to land managers by taking plot data (say 1 plot per 3,000 acres) and combining it with remotely sensed data to produce estimates at the pixel (30m²) level.
- Serve as more than a digital library. The info is generally available but the big gap (i.e., niche or opportunity) is to assist in analysis. Do so by providing analysis tools such as modeling work by TNC, at the University, etc., but also as a 'resource broker' that can help users apply similar modeling approaches.

Other

- As a group, stay focused on data gathering and dissemination. Do not collectively develop political or economic positions. Do not compile data with the 'secret' intention or personal objective of producing an economic, social, or political goal.' That will only create distrust and you will never be successful at pulling data together.
- Demographic census and land (parcel) sale data with land cover.
- Forest Resources is thought of as traditional forest, i.e., forest interior – CHANGE CONCEPT – expand to include urban and community forest, wherever there are trees. Access data available from groups that approach from this point of view – like MNSTAC
- Use of web technologies to make available data/information more accessible/useful.