

Policy and Procedure 14-1

Forest Inventory and Analysis Program

Issued By: Robert W. Farrell, State Forester

Effective Date: January 01, 2019

Codes/Mandates: Code of Virginia: [§10.1-1105](#) Additional duties of the State Forester and [§10.1-1124](#) Counties and certain cities to pay annual sums for forest protection, etc.

References: [Forest Inventory & Analysis - National Core Field Guide](#)

Forms: USFS SRS Form - Forest Inventory Map
USFS SRS Form - Forest Inventory Tally Sheets

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PURPOSE

To provide guidance to the Department of Forestry field staff when performing field data collection for the forest inventory and analysis program, as well as guidance on accessing forest inventory summary data.

POLICY

VDOF will partner with the [USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station - Forest Inventory and Analysis work unit](#) to expedite forest inventory data collection in the Commonwealth and provide a current and ongoing assessment of the condition of the forest resource. The current five-year Virginia's Forests report will be the basis for county fire protection billing on private lands until a subsequent report is made available.

DEFINITIONS

“Agency” and “VDOF” means the Virginia Department of Forestry.

“Commonwealth” means the Commonwealth of Virginia.

"**FIA**" means United States Forest Survey, Forest Inventory and Analysis.

"**Personal protective equipment (PPE)**" is equipment worn by a worker to minimize his/her exposure to specific occupational hazards. It protects the employee by creating a physical barrier between him/her and the workplace hazards. You can find PPE designed to protect eyes, face, head, ears, feet, hands, arms and whole body. PPE includes such items as respirators, gloves, fall protection, goggles, helmets, hardhats, safety shoes/boots, earplugs, chaps, gloves and more. PPE must be used when the eyes, face, hands, extremities or other parts of the body are exposed to workplace hazards that cannot be controlled by other means.

"**SRS-FIA**" means USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station, Forest Inventory and Analysis work unit, Knoxville, TN.

PROCEDURES

Overview

The Forest Inventory and Analysis program is authorized under the federal McSweeney/McNary Act Forest Research Act of 1928 to conduct inventories of the forests of the United States. Since 1997, VDOF has voluntarily partnered with the FIA program to expedite forest inventory data collection in the Commonwealth to provide more current Virginia forest resource data to users such as VDOF, forest industry, non-governmental organizations and local governments as well as the USDA Forest Service.

The VDOF FIA program is 75 percent funded by the USDA Forest Service and 25 percent by state general funds.

Objective

The target for the data collection element of FIA is to re-measure each Phase 2 and Enhanced Phase 2 inventory plot at approximately five-year intervals.

Structure

The VDOF program is structured with one program manager/coordinator and six work areas, each staffed by a forest inventory specialist, who is assisted by a wage forest inventory technician.

Field collection procedures are described in the [Forest Inventory and Analysis - National Core Field Guide](#).

The role of [SRS-FIA](#) includes, but is not limited to, field material preparation, quality assurance, data processing and compilation, as well as reporting.

IFRIS Reporting

- ◆ FIA Hours will be entered in IFRIS
 - Time Category: Grants/Funds - Dedicated
 - Time/Leave Code: FIA

Field Work

While staffing vacancies may require single-person crews in some circumstances, crews should plan to work in two-person units in areas with limited outside communications such as cell phone or radio, areas that have to be accessed by boat, etc. Boat operators will have a valid Virginia boater's license.

Field crews will plan work to make efficient use of travel time. If necessary, overnight travel is an option to improve production. Where practical, VDOF quarters should be utilized.

Field crews will use due diligence to attempt to reach landowners through courthouse record sources, by telephone or email or through contacts with neighboring properties.

Field crews will utilize notices on VDOF letterhead posted in parked VDOF vehicles ("window sheets") stating the purpose of the Forest Inventory program and providing phone numbers of the crew leader, manager and program support technician.

Field crews will be issued and wear high visibility clothing, such as blaze orange vests or yellow safety shirts, using special caution during hunting seasons. In addition, chaps, leather gloves and safety glasses will be issued for cut-overs and used at the employees' discretion. Fire, snake, hunting or hiking type boots with traction soles will be worn to reduce slips and falls, with the exception of wet areas, swamps and beaver ponds where rubber boots, hip or chest waders may be used, as appropriate.

Certification/Accuracy

FIA plots must have at least one individual who has successfully completed certification participating in field visits. The person shall have completed the certification test with at least an 80 percent score and maintain at least an 87 percent check score average. The person will have two opportunities in their career to complete certification or, if they become decertified, to recertify. At minimum eight percent of an FIA team member's work will be checked annually by a USDA Forest Service quality assurance forester to ensure compliance.

Data Transmission

IFRIS reporting FIA crews will endeavor to transmit collected plot data and complete field notes and maps, within one week of the field visit. Data will be transferred from a USDA Forest Service-provided portable data recorder to the COV VITA laptop to the USDA Forest Service [MIDAS](#) application.

Confidentiality

FIA data falls under the purview of an amendment to the Food Security Act of 1985. Release of identifying information, such as landowner names, parcel numbers or coordinates is in violation of Federal law.

In addition, any analyses completed are required to protect confidentiality for the affected parties. For example, an analysis of forest industry volumes must have an area of interest large enough to include data from three or more forest industry landowners.

FIA Data Dissemination

[SRS-FIA](#) has the primary role of FIA data compilation and dissemination with support from VDOF in publication review and focus on critical issues.

- ◆ The standard information products from the USDA Forest Service include:
 - Five-year "[Virginia's Forests](#)" publication
 - Annual Virginia FIA [Factsheets](#)
 - [FIA Standard Tables](#)
- ◆ Custom queries can be obtained through:
 - [EVALIDator](#) online query application and requests to the [Spatial Data Services section](#)
 - Technical reports will be produced that focus on specific issues.

Ancillary Studies

National Woodland Owners Survey

A plot ownership database from FIA crew data will be used as the basis for sampling landowners for National Woodland Owners Survey conducted by the [Family Forest Research Center](#), to provide demographic and objectives data on Virginia forestland owners.

National Forest Intensification Plots

The USDA Forest Service Atlanta Regional Office is currently funding an additional 268 FIA forest inventory plots to be added and measured on the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests.

Urban Forest Inventory

This is a developing program intended to collect urban tree inventory data, as well as data on impervious surfaces in the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia Metro area.

Felled Tree Studies

This study consists of field crews visiting 83 active harvesting sites per five-year cycle, to scale logs to obtain diameter and length measurements on a sample of approximately 25 felled trees. The location and product of interest is pre-designated by SRS-FIA. Crews will wear personal protective equipment (PPE) including hardhats, high visibility clothing and boots with traction soles and work in a manner to have the least impact on the logger operating on the site.

AUTHORITY

This policy and procedure is issued by the Virginia state forester.

INTERPRETATION

The FIA program manager, director of forest resource management and deputy state forester are responsible for the interpretation of this policy and procedure.

APPROVAL

I certify that this policy and procedure is approved and ready for publication.

John Pemberton

FIA Program Manager Name (Print)

FIA Program Manager Signature

Dean Cumbia

Director of Forest Resource Management Name (Print)

Director of Forest Resource Management Signature

Ed Zimmer

Deputy State Forester Name (Print)

Deputy State Forester Signature