



Friday, April 13, 2007

To: Dan Crittenden
LANDFIRE

Dan,

While the topic is still fresh in my mind, I wanted to share my impressions from the FRCC meeting you hosted in Portland this week. It was a good meeting and I appreciated a chance to reengage with the LANDFIRE folks and take a look at what's been going on.

It was really astounding to see how much good work is going on with that project, and as always I'm impressed by the professional approach and quality of the products that the LANDFIRE team has been cranking out. Unfortunately, I think we usually tend to focus on the rough spots instead of acknowledging the good work.

I came to the meeting thinking that FRCC mapping from LANDFIRE national was one of the rough spots, but came away thinking that it's a good product just the way it is. While most folks can look at the FRCC map for the west and find some local or regional results that are counterintuitive, I was actually relieved that these are there, a testament to the rule based process that created them. From a national perspective, which is where my focus must be, it's much **more important to be consistent and repeatable than technically correct.**

We must always include caveats with any maps or data that we provide; FRCC does not equate to fire risk, the break between classes is a construct more than a reality, for some systems the cover thresholds are not always ideal, the measure itself is really only a way to provide a sense of 😊 or 😞 to landscapes, or determine if we're somewhere in between. It would be unrealistic to expect it to be perfect.

My preference, therefore, is to stick with the unedited rule based process that maps FRCC and make the results the National FRCC map our standard for this first iteration of



LANDFIRE. We desperately need two data points to measure some trend to support the continued need to invest in management for restoration. We have been talking about FRCC as a measure of ecological status in fire adapted wildlands, more relevant over broad spatial and temporal scales. This product will not impact our annual accomplishment reporting, but serve to evaluate overall progress over time and space. Because of the need to produce another data point using the exact same rule set the next time, *I would ask that we do not go in and “tweak” the results in some of the rough areas*, but to explain in footnotes to the unedited product what exactly is contributing to unexpected results.

Is this going to be good enough at finer scales, like regions and states? Probably not. For those finer resolution needs, I suggest **LANDFIRE offers some guidance on consistent ways to improve the FRCC results for the finer scaled user**, including documentation of changes made, and possibly a place for regions to share this “improved” product if they wish to do so. That should not change the “official” FRCC map, but could be used to show local calibration results.

Finally, there should be **a well articulated plan for when a national update should occur** (five years, 10 years?) and a commitment to follow the same protocols in modeling to result in comparable data and perhaps trend information, so we can begin to answer the “So What?” questions regarding the greater implications of our efforts. I would also like to know if any annual care and feeding plans are in the works to incorporate management results and unplanned disturbance impacts between broader updates. I know the last things may be beyond the current mission, and yet we need to start planning for it now.

Thanks for the chance to participate.

/s/ Sue Stewart

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