

SEFireMap: Overview & Status Update – August 2019

Prepared by: NRCS and the Longleaf Alliance

Overview: SEFireMap (A new effort to develop fire mapping in Southeastern U.S.)

An improved, cohesive system to track both prescribed fire and wildfire activity on public and private lands will serve as a critical decision support tool to maximize the effectiveness of fire management practices – helping achieve the varied objectives of NRCS and its partners such as keeping working lands working, restoring the longleaf pine ecosystem, supporting DoD’s military and training mission, conserving listed and at-risk species, managing for wildfire risk, and minimizing the need to conserve species through regulation.

The SEFireMap project will be achieved through remote analysis of imaging data, supported by the collation of spatial data (when available) to document, track, and “ground-truth” actual fire activity. Achievement of a SEFireMap would allow USDA Programs, America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative, the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning & Sustainability (SERPPAS), and other partners to identify under-served areas as they exist or emerge, and then prioritize deployment of technical and financial support. Project deliverables would include a “dashboard” for regional, state and local decision-making. With wildfire risk increasing, the importance of enhancing and expanding prescribed burn implementation is great, while both funding and fire crews are in short supply. Therefore, it is imperative that we and our partners have a reliable method to select priority geographies to manage natural resources and wildfire risk.

The current funding level is \$1.3 M, available for the period 2019-2022 as an Above-States Initiative award from the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service to the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (Endowment) for assistance in management of the project; a sub award to the Longleaf Alliance (LLA) will augment technical assistance for decision-making. A determination of the need for additional funds will be made once a final Scope of Work (SOW) and Budget is developed for the project.



Next Steps/Project Coordination:

1. **Funding Obligation** –NRCS funds are currently in the process of being obligated to the Endowment. An early sub award to the LLA will secure staff to provide continuous technical support for the project.
2. **Technical Oversight Team (TOT)** - USDA has reviewed Statement of Interest applications and selected 11 candidates for the Team; a formal request to the candidates' agency or organization of employment will follow. The TOT will follow this project through all phases of its development, serving as an advisory group providing technical review and input to ensure success. The TOT is comprised of members from across partnerships and includes contractors with specific skillsets not otherwise available. The TOT's role will be advisory to NRCS and the Endowment, though their recommendations will be given strong consideration. Lucas Furman (LLA) will serve as the TOT lead, serving as the liaison between NRCS, the Endowment and larger fire community to communicate feedback and project updates.
3. **RFP for SOW** – In July, the Endowment circulated a RFP to contract out the project scoping phase, supporting a thorough national assessment of existing datasets, spatial information, modeling, tools, and approaches. Applications are currently under review. In 2018, the Good Map committee of SERPPAS conducted an initial assessment within the Southeast and identified tools that could contribute to this concept. A more in-depth, national scoping process will optimize decision-making, use of funds, and utility of the SEFireMap. A primary goal is to ensure that the SEFireMap leverages similar efforts in other regions, integrates new technology, and crosswalks with parallel efforts as appropriate to ensure seamless fire planning at larger geographies (especially Western states where fire management is a top priority). The TOT will advise this work. Scoping deliverables will include workshops hosted by the contractor to solicit feedback from partners across the SE and elsewhere on applicable or complementary tools or efforts already underway.
4. **Budget/Timeline** - Based on information collected in the Scoping Phase, a SOW, detailed budget and timeline will be developed as a final deliverable by the contractor. The SOW and Budget will receive technical review by the TOT. If additional funding support is identified, Partners will be contacted to assist with this need.
5. **RFP for SEFireMap** - A second RFP will solicit applications to implement the SEFireMap project. Over the course of the project, Lucas Furman (LLA) will serve as the project's primary point of contact, communicating updates to individuals and partnerships such as SERPPAS and the LPC and soliciting continuous feedback on the process and outcomes.
6. **Data Integration** - NRCS will work with the selected vendor(s) to develop an acceptable approach by which prescribed burns conducted using Farm Bill funds under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) can be captured within the new SEFireMap. As the Farm Bill is the primary source of funding for prescribed burns on private lands, this is a critical action. Personally identifiable information (PII) of USDA program participants will be protected in this process, as required by statute.
7. **Internet Host Site** - The partnership will work together to identify and secure funding support for an independent web portal that meets federal security requirements and is immune from a closure decision by any one agency or partner. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has indicated their interest in managing joint funding to meet this longer-term need.

For additional information about this project, please contact Lucas Furman at Lucas@LongleafAlliance.org or Bridgett Costanzo at Bridgett.Costanzo@usda.gov.

Memorandum

To: Fire Community Colleagues

From: Bridgett Costanzo and Lucas Furman

Date: August 12, 2019

RE: SE FireMap Technical Oversight Team

The Natural Resources Conservation Service and U.S Endowment for Forestry and Communities are pleased to announce that the following subject matter experts will comprise the initial membership of the SE FireMap Technical Oversight Team (TOT). This group will play an instrumental role in helping shape the proposed SE FireMap. We received applications from more qualified individuals than we could realistically accommodate on the Team and are very grateful to all those who expressed an interest in directly supporting the project. When reviewing TOT applicants, we were very conscious to avoid potential conflicts of interest between Team members and representatives from organizations submitting proposals for the Scoping and/or Implementation phases of the project.

We will be sure to keep key fire community groups apprised of our progress as the SE FireMap begins to take shape.

TOT Membership (11)	Affiliation	Category
Jared Bledsoe	DOD	Federal
Brain Camposano	FFS; Southern Group of State Foresters	State
Mike Dueitt	USDA Forest Service	Federal
Keith Gauldin	SE Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies	State
David Godwin	UF; Southern Fire Exchange	Academia
Todd Hawbaker	USGS	Federal
Rua Mordecai	USFWS; SERPPAS, LCC	Federal
Josh Picotte	USGS	Federal/Contractor
Justin Shedd	NCSU	Academia
Jim Smith	TNC	NGO
Jon Wallace	USFWS	Federal