SE FIREMAP

An improved system for mapping fires across the Southeastern U.S.

BACKGROUND:

More effective spatial tracking of wildland fire and understanding fire patterns across the Southeast landscape are critical needs identified by a consortium of conservation partners, including members of the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability and America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative. In 2020, NRCS provided funds through an agreement with the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities to support a new Southeast FireMap. More accurate fire mapping will promote better decision-making to prioritize funding for staff, projects, training, equipment and more. Fire is key to healthy native landscapes in the Southeast to keep "working lands" working, restore the longleaf pine ecosystem, support the Department of Defense's military and training missions, conserve listed and at-risk species, manage for wildfire risk, and minimizing the need to conserve species through regulation. The importance of enhancing and expanding prescribed burn management cannot be over-stated - it is imperative that we have a reliable method to select priority geographies to manage natural resources and wildfire risk.

Objectives:

Develop a cohesive system using remote sensing to track both prescribed fire and wildfires across landscapes of the Southeast, providing significantly improved resolution over other regional and national systems currently in use;

Identify priority databases already in use by partners to test mapping accuracy and help train the SE FireMap toward reducing error rates;

Develop comprehensive coverage of both public and private lands;

Offer the option to hide sensitive data from the public, as determined by each data provider;

Seek to achieve a mapping scale that balances the desire to support site-specific management decisions with the ability to ensure accuracy;

Coordinate continuously with fire mapping experts within the U.S. to facilitate future expansion of this project to include other regions, especially the Western U.S.;

Deliver the SE FireMap online for public use as a decision support tool "dashboard" with standard query options, as well as spatial data and pdf map downloads, to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of fire management toward conservation, economic and public safety goals.

PROCESS:

Statements of Interest were submitted by anyone with technical expertise applicable to the project objectives who was willing to serve on a Technical Oversight Team. The Team is led by the Longleaf Alliance and consists of ten experts from across the partnerships who are guiding the project through all phases of development. This project has been separated into a "Scoping Phase" and "Development Phase."

Scoping Phase:

To ensure product quality, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was released in 2019 for a national assessment of existing spatial information, models, remote sensing, other tools and approaches relevant to developing an improved fire mapping system. Tall Timbers Research Station was chosen to receive this award and is currently leading the scoping effort. Deliverables from the Scoping Phase will consist of recommendations for reference mapping products and tools, methodologies, priority databases to test and train the map, and budget estimates for the Development Phase of the SE FireMap.

Development Phase:

Based on recommendations resulting from the Scoping Phase, next steps for development of the SE FireMap will be decided by the sponsors and the Technical Oversight Team. We hope to have a draft SE FireMap developed by 2022.

For additional information about this project, go to https://www.landscapepartnership.org/key-issues/wildland-fire and quickly REGISTER.

For questions, please contact Lucas Furman at Lucas@LongleafAlliance.org. or Bridgett Costanzo at Bridgett.Costanzo@usda.gov.

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