FIRE REGIME CONDITION CLASS GUIDEBOOK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fire Regime Condition Class Version 1.0.5

The field procedures for Fire Regime and Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) are used to describe general characteristics of a landscape that can be used to calculate and classify the Fire Regime and FRCC when combined with estimates of the natural (historical) fire regime reference values. A landscape is considered to be the contiguous area within a delineation that encompasses the variation of the natural fire regimes. Typically this is the area within a subwatershed (hydrologic unit code 6), but other types of landscape delineation can be used. The landscape is stratified into biophysical and project or treatment strata. When using these methods for National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) project submission or accomplishments, the landscape FRCC methods are used for large projects that contain multiple stands, while the stand FRCC method is used for small areas, typically containing only one stand.

The data collected for determination of FRCC characterize the size of the area, geographic location, biophysical conditions, and fire regime characteristics. This method provides the ecological information that can be used to classify the landscape fire regime and determine similarity, departure, ecological sustainability risks, abundance of vegetation-fuel classes, and the FRCC. These variables can be determined for several scales: landscape, project, stands, or stratifications. The Standard Landscape Method (formally known as Standard Guidebook Method) and Landscape Scorecard Method are used for landscape scale assessments. For small project or treatment areas that are not landscape in size, a scorecard method (Stand Scorecard Method) is provided for determining a stand or patch scale FRCC based on the context of the stand within the landscape FRCC. The Standard Landscape Method provides the training and validation process for use of the Fire Regime and FRCC Scorecard Methods (both the Landscape and Stand Scorecard).

This version (1.0.5) of the field procedures guidebook has been the result of 2 years of development, beta-testing, and revision, hierarchically stepped down from the original FRCC concepts and definitions published in Hardy and others (2001), Hann and Bunnell (2001), and GTR-87 (Schmidt and others 2002). We thank all the people who tested the beta versions of FRCC field procedures guidebook and provided recommendations and solutions. We also thank all the people who participated in development of the reference conditions.

An FRCC mapping guidebook and software is in development and planned for release in June, 2004. This guidebook and software emulate the field procedure methods.

The FRCC guidebooks (both field procedures and mapping guides) are developed and implemented by an Interagency and TNC working group. This working group is chartered and managed by the Interagency Fuels Committee. The FRCC guidebook, software, website, and associated publications are developed as a component under the Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) Fire Effects Unit in association with the Fire Monitoring and Inventory system (FIREMON) and in parallel with the RMRS Rapid Assessment and LANDFIRE projects.

No more changes will be made in this versions (1.0.5) guidebook data fields, definition of those fields, or in the procedures for FRCC calculation and classification. There will continue to be additions in descriptive text to this version that will result in release of an updated version 1.0.5 with a different date shown on the lower left of each page of the guidebook. There will continue to be refinements in the potential natural vegetation (PNV) classification and associated reference conditions by geographic area as regional or subregional teams revise these values and as the National Rapid Assessment delivers refined PNV and reference values. A Nationally consistent process has been developed for revision of the reference conditions. Contact the help desk for facilitation of this process. There will continue to be improvements in the form formats, code sheets, text descriptions, data recorded applications, software and website to improve functionality and incorporate updated reference conditions. Users should check the website (http://frcc.gov/) or the help desk (helpdesk@frcc.gov) to obtain the guidebook with the latest text changes in description, PNV classification, reference conditions, and software.

A version 2.0 of the FRCC field procedures is scheduled for development that will be revised based on results from nationally consistent science peer review and recommendations, research focused on the FRCC methods and reference conditions, results from the National Landfire projects, and assessment of training and implementation tools. This version 2.0 will be different in that it will be scheduled for implementation by geographic area following the schedule for the National Landfire projects. The first geographic areas scheduled for delivery of version 2.0 will be in 2006. A version change in the FRCC mapping guidebook and software will occur in parallel.

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