Forest Inventory and Analysis

The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program provides current, reliable information about the status of forests and forest resources by continually collecting and analyzing data. FIA research plots are selected randomly without regard to ownership to ensure that the inventory reflects the entire area. If Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) FIA staff have contacted and requested access to your property, it is because one of these plots falls on your property or it is necessary to cross your property to access one. Below are answers to questions frequently asked by such landowners, like yourself.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why do you want to access my property?** The area we wish to access was selected randomly without regard to ownership. This process helps ensure that the study is free from bias and that it reflects the condition of all forest resources. We strive to access every plot so we can provide the most reliable data possible. While visiting, we will take multiple measurements and gauge the condition of the forest within that plot.

- **When do you want to visit my property?** We will gladly coordinate with you to schedule a time that is convenient for you.

- **What do you need me to do?** Your participation in this program matters! Please simply notify our staff that contacted you of your decision regarding permission to access your property. Nothing beyond your permission is required.

- **What is a plot?** A FIA research plot is a randomly selected piece of land where we collect data about trees and ground cover. Once the site is selected, our staff use public records to find out who owns the property so they can ask for access to collect FIA data. If a plot stretches across more than one owner's property, we contact all the landowners involved to request permission.

- **What data will be collected on these plots?**
    Tree Species- What trees species exist? How abundant are they?
    Tree Numbers and Tree Size- Is the area losing or gaining trees? How quickly are trees growing?
    Tree Survival and Mortality- How well are trees surviving?
    Tree Crown Condition- A tree's crown can tell us a lot. We can see how healthy it is, how well it is growing and its impact on plants growing underneath it.
    Tree Damage- Knowing which areas and tree species show damage helps decision makers to develop effective management plans.
    Invasive Plants- We monitor their abundance, distribution, and effects.
    Ground Cover- The existence of other plants, permeable surface and impermeable surfaces help us to learn more about potential water infiltration and runoff.
    Ownership- Knowing who owns forests and trees can help to integrate management strategies across ownerships.

- **Will the data collected on my property be kept confidential?** By law, specific plot data, location, and owner's name will be kept confidential. The data will be presented only in statistical summaries. Data collected on FIA plots cannot be accessed through the Freedom of Information Act. Information from a single owner's land will not be used for tax purposes, nor will it be used in regulation.

- **What are you going to do with the data you collect?** The data from individual sites and landowners will be complied into statistical data summaries. These data summaries are available to the public.

- **Why is forest inventory vital?** Agencies, universities, communities, and industry use the summarized data for a variety of purposes including tree health, forest planning, risk assessment, wildlife habitat evaluation, fire risk assessments, estimating severity of natural disasters to the forest resource, estimating biomass supplies for fuel, estimating and observing carbon stocks, checking species distribution, forest growth and yield monitoring, and much more.

- **Who will be visiting this site? How long does it take?** Many of our data collectors are KDF staff. However, we also partner with other states, contracted data collectors or USDA Forest Service. One or two individuals will access the site. It will typically only take a few hours for them to collect the required FIA data.

- **How often will the plot be visited?** A small percentage of plots will be revisited to perform a quality assurance inspection. These inspections typically occur within 30 days and help us maintain our high standards of data quality. This visit will only take a few hours at which point no further visits will be necessary until the site is resurveyed in the future. We continually survey each research plot on a 5-to-10-year cycle. Thus, we may contact you again in approximately 5 to 10 years to ask permission to access your property.

- **What if I want to cut or plant trees within the research plot area?** It is important to us that the presence of the plot does not influence the way you use your property. Continue to manage your property as you see fit, regardless of the location of the research plot.

- **What if I plan to sell the land?** When it is time for the plot to be revisited, we will use public records to verify who the current landowner is and contact them to request permission. You do not need to disclose the presence of the research plot on your property to potential buyers. If you plan to sale the property within the year, please tell the KDF staff who contacted you. They will adjust their work accordingly.

- **Who is responsible if somebody gets hurt on my property?** If a government employee (i.e., KDF Staff, USDA Forest Service, other state employees, etc.) is injured while conducting an inventory on private property, payment of the employee's medical expenses and lost wages are the responsibility of the individual's employer. Contractors are required to have Workers' Compensation and Liability Insurance.

Additional Questions? Please reach out to the KDF employee who contacted you or visit our website at https://eec.ky.gov/Natural-Resources/Forestry/Pages/default.aspx.

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