



1. Organizational Approach to GIT:

The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) (<http://www.forestry.state.al.us/>) currently makes limited use of GIT. It has not yet developed a strong GIS capability, and does not make use of remote sensing (RS) technology at this time. In addition, the AFC does not receive any assistance from any outside agencies regarding GIT. The AFC does, however, make use of GPS. AFC aircraft are equipped with GPS units, and it recently purchased GPS units for each of its 67 county offices. The Assistant State Forester coordinates policy, funding and overall organization involvement regarding GIT, consistent with other program commitments. Current application of GIT is very limited, with no dedicated staff to coordinate or develop uses. However, the AFC is considering the employment of a dedicated person to develop and provide training in GIT applications. There are no policies governing GIT use in the AFC at this time. Limited funding availability and the need for training personnel are issues that the AFC face in its efforts to increase its use of GIT.

2. GIT Applications and Data Utilized:

Current AFC uses of GPS involve two applications. The first is for **forest health**, where aircraft mounted GPS units are used to delineate ground coordinates, which are forwarded to a contractor who places them into a GIS program and creates maps. These maps are used to show **landowners** hotspots of Southern Pine Beetle infestations on their property, and are very useful for locating and monitoring these spots for salvage or control operations, respectively. These maps are also produced at broader scales for trend analyses of Southern Pine Beetle spread on county, regional and state levels. The second use involves **forest characterization**, where AFC employees use GPS units to locate forest inventory plots. This work is done in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) as a part of its Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program. Potential uses of GIT by the AFC include the construction of database information, such as fire reporting and landowner assistance. AFC is currently evaluating several options for purchasing application software for initial use in producing internal maps for landowner assistance programs.

3. Statewide and Other GIT Linkages:

Alabama does not have a designated entity in state government to serve as a focal point for GI/GIT. However, the Geological Survey of Alabama (GSA) (<http://www.gsa.state.al.us>) has informally served in this capacity in recent years, due to its roles as the primary scientific and mapping agency in the state, and leading user and developer of GI/GIT among state agencies. Alabama does not have a formal GI/GIT coordinating group; however two informal groups do exist. The State Government GIS User Group serves as the state's informal GI/GIT group, while the ad hoc Alabama GIS Council Working Group explores the creation of an Alabama GIS Council. Currently, the AFC has no linkages to these organizations.

The Geological Survey of Alabama (GSA) maintains the Alabama Node of the National Geospatial Data Clearinghouse (<http://www.gsa.state.al.us/gsa/GIS/clearinghouse.html>). Population of the metadata database is ongoing and GSA is soliciting the cooperation and contribution of other entities in Alabama. GSA has established a prototype Internet GIS data server that will be expanded to include a number of data layers related to mineral, energy, water, and biological resources of Alabama, as well as certain framework data. In 1998, GSA has conducted a series of workshops around the state to inform participants about GI/GIT, instruct them in the use of the Alabama Clearinghouse Node, and stress the importance of metadata development.