

# Alabama's FIA Crew Leads the Way in Quality

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**T**he Alabama Forestry Commission has had crews collecting forest resource data for the Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) project since the spring of 1997. FIA has gone through many changes in the last 12 years including the type of data that is collected, the type of data



recorder used, and the addition of GPS units for assisting in identifying plot locations. There was even a 50 percent reduction in the work force – from ten crew leaders in 1997 to the current five crew leaders. However, one thing has remained constant over the last 12 years, and that is the high quality of data that Alabama's crew leaders collect. Despite frequently having to work in adverse conditions, the FIA crew as a whole consistently receives high marks

when they have their work checked by Quality Assurance personnel from the US Forest Service.

I am proud to announce that not only did the FIA crew receive high "check plot" scores for the first two quarters of Fiscal Year 2009, but they also had the highest check plot score Summer 2009

average of all 13 states in the Forest Service's southern region. Alabama's 97.44 percent average score narrowly bested the 97.34 percent score of East Texas.

After working over six years as a crew leader, I can attest to the fact that collecting quality data day in and day out is a significant achievement. So many days a crew leader is working in conditions that are physically and/or mentally severely challenging. When a crew leader is being cut up by briars, wading through a chest-deep cypress swamp, or traversing 50 percent slopes all day long, it can be extremely difficult to maintain focus on the data one is supposed to be collecting. Collecting high-quality data consistently on a daily basis, and in all kinds of working conditions, is truly remarkable.

The five current FIA crew leaders – Josh Angel, Wendell Atkins, Rickey Fields, Jerry McGhee, and Adam Ziegenbein – do an outstanding job. Not only do they collect high-quality data, but they also work very hard. Since 2003 when I became the FIA Coordinator, the crew has completed its yearly allotment of FIA plots ahead of schedule. I am very fortunate to have a crew as good as these five men and I commend them for the fantastic job they do! 🍌

