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USFS-NASA Virtual Pitch Fest: Exploring a new way to connect Earth observations research with decision-support needs

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Abstract Text:

In June 2020, the US Forest Service (USFS) and NASA held a virtual event to solicit ideas on how satellite-based Earth observations (EO) data could better address natural resource management and monitoring needs. The USFS-NASA Virtual Pitch Fest was proposed as a creative solution to collaboration challenges brought on by COVID-19, using the opportunity to explore a different way of advancing the use of EO data and applications-centered research. A total of 52 ideas were presented during the pitch fest, using a 5-minute pitch format, with opportunity for questions and feedback in real-time by participants. Pitch fest presenters and participants represented government (federal, state, local), academia, private sector, and non-governmental organization from across the United States, Europe, and Mexico. Following the two-day virtual event, a review panel composed of EO scientists and natural resource specialists with subject matter expertise in seven different thematic areas evaluated the ideas based on set criteria. The thematic areas were highly multi-disciplinary and included inventory and analysis, forest hydrology, knowledge discovery, soil mapping and inventory, fire and fuels, land cover mapping and monitoring, and disturbance, resilience, resistance, and recovery.

Overall, we found that the virtual pitch fest led to greater participation, connection, and ultimately greater equity because many people that may not have traditionally had access to or been part of the outreach for such an event in person were able to show up and contribute. The outcomes from the pitch fest will be used to: (1) better understand data gaps and opportunities for EO to contribute to decision-making for land management agencies, (2) determine priority areas for support by NASA and USFS, (3) inform and refine stakeholder needs/ feasibility studies, and (4) increase participation in NASA Work Groups and Early Adopter Programs. We believe that the "marketplace model" afforded by the virtual pitch fest can be a novel way of connecting the research and applications communities, while providing tangible and actionable information for leadership in different agencies. This information can be used to inform future programming and budgets.

Session Selection:

SY001. Addressing the Need for Earth-Observation Capacity Development at the Local, National, Regional, and Global Scales

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