



## FOREST BIOMETRICS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

4033 SW Canyon Road  
Portland, Oregon 97221

A Non-Profit Research Corporation since 2002  
For the advancement of research, education, and service in forest biometrics

May 25, 2015

To FBRI Supporting Organizations:

The Board of Directors met on March 16 and 17 at the World Forestry Center in Portland. Although we covered a lot of material on those two days, in this letter I'm only going to focus on the highlights.

I'll start with Rob Taylor's decision to leave the Board. Rob has served on the Board longer than any other current member has. He was first elected in 2006 and re-elected every three years since. Given his tenure, we often look to Rob to provide us with the historical background on some of the issues that we have to grapple with from time to time. Luckily, Rob agreed to stay on until we can identify his replacement. That's one of our highest priorities.

While we're on the topic of folks moving on, I'll give you an update on our technical support situation. As most of you already know Free State Drivers terminated its contract with FBRI in January. To be quite honest, it has been a very difficult transition for many reasons. To help us get through this difficult period we contracted with Agile Data Solutions to provide us with recommendations on how to move forward. We specifically told them that we want to take advantage of new software and new hardware technologies so that we could position our computer infrastructure and systems to provide for the Institute's growth. Dr. Joel Henry, Agile's President, and his staff have helped us tremendously. The technical support vacuum created by Mr. Chuck Vopicka's departure is being temporarily filled by Dr. Jim Arney. Technical support is of the highest importance to our Supporting Organizations and so it is absolutely necessary that Jim take on these responsibilities. The downside to all of this, however, is that Jim has had little time to do anything else. This will not be fixed anytime soon. We intend to continue discussing our technical support options during our next Board meeting on June 24 and 25 in Portland.

It has become clear to us that Jim needs to begin training/mentoring individuals so that they can become expert users of FPS. We absolutely have to get people way up to speed on FPS. It is no longer acceptable for Jim to be the only FPS expert on the planet. The Board has talked about this possibility many times over the past several years but it is now time to act. Earlier this year we notified our Supporting Organizations and Clients (via email) that we were actively looking for individuals who would be interested in this extraordinary opportunity. We are now in the process of preparing an Independent Contractor's Agreement (ICA) with a scope of work that would describe the duties of an Inventory/Planning Forester. Personally, I would like to find at least two consultants willing to take on this opportunity to work closely with Jim.

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To fund these positions we may need to increase the dues of our Supporting Organizations. We all knew this day was coming. To keep Jim and two new FBRI consultants fully funded may take a significant increase in dues. The Board will take this up during our next meeting and a decision will be made. The Board has discussed the need to increase dues to fund other initiatives as well. For example, we believe there is a strong demand for FPS training including workshops, videos, Webinars, etc. All of this takes funding. If you have strong feelings about dues, I suggest that you contact me or one of the other Directors (see Attachment A) and tell us what you're thinking. I also suggest that you start thinking about your company's budget for 2016. It's better to tell your senior managers right now that an increase is on the way, but also make sure you're prepared to tell them the additional funding is essential to ensure the long-term viability of the Institute and to provide services and support that are crucial to your organization's success.

Some of you have expressed an interest in attending one of our Board meetings. The Board has discussed this on several occasions and it looks like we're real close to making that happen. A good opportunity would be the November Board meeting because it is held in conjunction with the Institute's annual meeting. This is a big step for us but the upside is that it increases the "transparency" of the Institute. The Board will discuss this matter during our June meeting and a decision will be made. So stay tuned and look for my next Board report following the June meeting.

A few years ago, we started warning Supporting Organizations that FBRI would no longer support FPS Version 6 once we released Version 7. My company made the switch to FPS Version 7 earlier this year after we depleted our inventory for 2014 harvesting operations. Upgrades can be complicated but they are necessary to take advantage of the new features that are offered. So, if you haven't done so, upgrade to Version 7 as soon as possible. Also, according to Jim, the Version 6 numbers are "not as right" as the Version 7 numbers.

To provide for the calibration of FPS Version 7 libraries, Jim upgraded TRS Tools. This upgraded version was distributed to a limited number of individuals who tested various aspects of the program. We have learned that this version of TRS Tools is a lot harder to use than we had anticipated. We also learned that the documentation was lacking in details and was not comprehensive enough to stand on its own. Users had to get a lot of advice and guidance from Jim to conduct their analyses. All of this will require the Board to rethink what to do with TRS Tools. Some of us on the Board are now of the mind that it might not be in the best interest of FBRI to release this software. Not only will Jim get bombarded with questions, we run the risk of having "uncertified" FPS projections popping up all over the place. Both of these outcomes concern the Board tremendously. This will require time and effort to figure out and determine the benefits and risks associated with doing so. In the meantime, don't expect to see a copy of TRS Tools show up in your Inbox. I want to assure you, however, that the Board remains committed to providing a mechanism to update, calibrate, and localize FPS libraries.

This year's annual meeting will be on Tuesday, November 10. It's a great venue for you to network with resource professionals that rely on FPS for forest inventory, growth and yield, and forest planning. It also provides you with an opportunity to discuss issues that are relevant to your organization with one or more of the Institute's Directors. But, most importantly, this is the place to

learn first-hand from Dr. Arney what the Institute has accomplished during the year, and what the work plan looks like going forward. If you want to register for the annual meeting, contact Richard Zabel at [richard@forestbiometrics.org](mailto:richard@forestbiometrics.org). A notice will also be distributed to FBRI Supporting Organizations as we get closer to the meeting.

Thank you for your continued support of FBRI. We have a very enthusiastic and professional user community, and your active participation in the Institute is critical to our direction and success. Come to the annual meeting and let us know what's on your mind. If for some reason you can't attend the November 10 meeting, contact Jim, me, or anyone on the Board of Directors and tell us about your concerns.

Best regards,

*Dan Opalach*

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## Attachment A

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