

**5th CPF – GFIS Implementation
Group Meeting
October 17-18, 2005**

MINUTES

Global Forest Information Service - GFIS
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CPF - Global Forest Information Service (GFIS)

5th CPF – GFIS Implementation Group Meeting,

October 17-18, 2005

FAO, Rome, Italy

MINUTES

Participants:

Michael Hailu, CIFOR

Magnus Grylle, FAO

Johannes Keizer, FAO (Item 4)

Eero Mikkola, IUFRO

Toral Patel-Weynand, NBII

Gillian Petrokofsky, CABI

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

Michael Hailu (CIFOR) welcomed the GFIS Implementation Group (IG) to the meeting and thanked all core partners for their contributions to GFIS. Michael Hailu informed the participants that he would moderate the meeting on request of IUFRO (Mayer), because Mayer could not attend the meeting.

The participants agreed that the objective of the meeting was to discuss the status of GFIS, to achieve a concrete outline for the GFIS Business Plan, and to prepare a working plan for the next six months.

2. Matters arising - Follow-up to the issues agreed at the 4th GFIS IG meeting in Brisbane

The actions of the minutes of the 4th CPF-GFIS Implementation Group Meeting were gone through briefly.

IUFRO (Mikkola) informed that:

- a) the current status of GFIS had been communicated after the Congress in order to inform existing Partners of the current status of the GFIS process, the fate of the metadata they had previously submitted to GFIS, and new expectations for metadata provision;
- b) IUFRO was investigating needs of information providers for the necessary helpdesk functions;
- c) IUFRO was preparing a President's invitation letter to IUFRO members; and
- d) the coordinator had prepared the GFIS concept paper in collaboration with all IG members.

CIFOR (Hailu) informed that two FRIM staff members had been sent to CIFOR for training in October and CIFOR had covered the travel and accommodation costs of the two FRIM staff members. The results of that training are already searchable through GFIS.

CABI (Petrokofsky) informed that CABI and FAO had a meeting about the metadata standard for publications on Friday, 14 October, at FAO. The results of the meeting will be reported under the next item.

3. Current status of GFIS

3.1 Briefing on partnership development and support (IUFRO)

IUFRO (Mikkola) informed of the following actions in terms of partnership development:

- The current members listed on the GFIS site had been informed about the status of GFIS.
- U.S Information providers were informed that NBII had become a member of the GFIS Implementation and that it would offer them an additional service as a regional support organization (see Annex 1).
- ITTO was preparing metadata feeds to GFIS and proposed resources for GFIS in their Bi-annual Work Programme 2006-07, which would be discussed at the ITTC meeting in Yokohama, November 2005.
- Based on a meeting with IUCN Forest, IUCN was interested to provide metadata to GFIS and requested user statistics of GFIS in order to be able to promote the participation of IUCN in GFIS to its members.
- Brief GFIS presentations were given by the coordinator at the Sixty-third session of the UNECE Timber Committee on 27 September 2005 and at the Seventh Nordic-Baltic Forum for Communication and Co-operation in the Nordic-Baltic area on 23 September 2005.
- IUFRO was preparing a President's invitation for the IUFRO members to provide metadata to GFIS. The action would be implemented in two stages: The first invitation letter would be sent to around 100 institutes with information about four GFIS information types available on their web sites, and the second invitation letter would be sent to the rest of IUFRO members.

In this context, a list of potential GFIS partners which should be contacted and requested to provide metadata to GFIS was outlined:

- All CPF members
- USDA Forest Service
- European Tropical Forest Research Network, ETFRN
- Global Forest Watch (CFW)
- CGIAR Research Centers
- Institutes that attended two GFIS Asia consultations
- Industry associations
- The Rio Conventions, Joint Liaison Group

3.2 Briefing on information exchange standard and system development (CABI and FAO)

CABI (Petrokofsky) and FAO (Grylle) had a meeting on 14 October in order to examine in detail the AGRIS-AP for publications and determine how the GFIS publication standard could be brought more closely in line with it, while retaining the greater simplicity felt to be desirable for GFIS users.

They informed that they also met with Keizer (FAO, GILW) and three of his team who worked closely with the AGRIS-AP. The AGRIS-AP was updated since GFIS had first noted possible problems in using it for serial publications. There should be no publication-type resources impossible to describe using this AP.

Keizer expressed the strong view that there was no value in having a Metadata standard for publications that was overly simple. The AGRIS-AP was already considered a 'simple' exchange format that would enable all types of Metadata from the very complex library records to much simpler institutional records to be expressed in a consistent way. It was recognized that some training might be needed to use the AP, and the GILW group said that they would be able to offer this to GFIS partners in need of assistance.

GFIS should therefore adopt the entire AP and make a decision about which fields to index and display in GFIS. FAO and CABI would pursue this and hope to have an improved implementation ready by the end of 2005.

4. What do partners expect from GFIS?

"Feedback on GFIS from information providers and users, August-October 2005" compiled by the coordinator was reviewed and discussed (Appendix 2). The participants welcomed the feedback, noted that though quite limited it was potentially useful and emphasized that it was important to receive feedback from partners as one of the tools needed in order to develop GFIS in a more user-friendly way for both users and information providers. It was agreed that the feedback list would be gone through again when the work plan for the next six months was prepared under item 6 of the meeting.

5. Draft GFIS Business Plan

The IG had an intensive discussion on the elements of the GFIS Business Plan focusing on what value GFIS added and why it was needed. The IG provided its view on the following aspects:

Vision of GFIS

- Bring together all stakeholders and users to communicate their online forest resources through a GFIS gateway.
- All key players are available through GFIS.
- Key players use information from GFIS (scientists, planners/design makers, private sector, educators and private citizens).
- Address a variety of info needs (gaps) for those users.
- Guide users to the right info.

- Alliance for a common infrastructure for different forestry info services.
- GFIS is a site of choice for selected info types.

Purpose

- Create meaningful linkage between significant forestry information providers/consumers.
- Coherence between different forestry information systems.
- Provide “framework” for organizing forestry info.
- Provide easy access to the different capacities and skills of GFIS partners.
- Increase availability/visibility of all partners.

Objectives

- All GFIS partners use common data exchange formats for events, vacancies, news and publications.
- All CPF members participate in GFIS.
- In 5 years, 50% of IUFRO members participate.
- Full text web search service of GFIS partners.
- Forest open archive in which at least 10 institutes participate.
- 50% of GFIS partners come from developing countries.

Guiding principles

- Responsibility for content stays with partners.
- Open membership to the global forestry community.
- GFIS is a partnership (not a legal entity) that works through its members.
- All GFIS products/services are global public goods.

Who are the users of GFIS?

Two-pronged approach (key users)

- Info providers
- Users (Individuals and Institutions)

Forestry segment of Rio Convention

- GFIS channel is for convention

What can GFIS offer – products/services?

Information providers

- Metadata tools/standards
- Capacity building
- Internal IP based single search option
- Forum to make their information visible

Users (institutions and individuals)

- Information that is tailor-made (republished) for institutions/projects
- Access to different information types (meetings, vacancies, etc.)
- Portal services

Competitors of GFIS

Services to information providers

- Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI)
- Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF)
- Inter American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN)
- WAICENT
- UNESCO (CDS/ISIS)
- FORREX
- CABI
- Google searches
- ITIS (Integrated Taxonomy Information System)
- IUCN

Service to Users

Biome AGRIFOR, ECO PORT, CABI, AGRIS, FAO Forestry Info, Google Scholar, Forest library services, IUFRO, USDF Forest Service, NBII, Canadian Forest Service, National forest services, Forest Conversation Advocacy, GISIN (Invasive species), GISP (Global Invasive Species Program), GFW/WRI, Specialized networks (ETFRN, AFRONET, FORAFRI), E-news letters and private forest information sites.

Scope for GFIS

- “Forestry” in its broadest sense (IUFRO Divisions)
- Local, national, regional, global
- All languages
- Decision to include any piece of information rests with data owner, not with GFIS

Competitive Advantage

- Deliver information service no one else offers
- Partnership
- Value added
- Global public good (GPG)
- Knowledge base of GFIS
- Access to the global forest community
- Access to tools developed by partners
- Set of robust information exchange tools/approaches/methodologies

Resources for GFIS

- Both financial and human
- GFIS members (in-kind/financial): IUFRO, FAO, CABI, CIFOR, NBII (potential), UNFF Secretariat
- Potential donors: ADB, EU, DFID, IDB, GEF, INFODEV, ITTO
- CPF Members (e.g. World Bank)
- Advertising/Private Sector

- JPOs/Interns
- Secondment (Japan, Australia, Korea, etc.)

Organization of GFIS

Steering Committee

- GFIS governance (appointed by CPF)
- Strategic plan & overall policy
- Resource mobilization
- Build high-level political support
- Review and approve work plan developed by IG
- Provide regular report to CPF

Implementation Group

- Appointed by/reports to SC
- Scientific, partnership and technical aspects of GFIS
- Develop work plans and assign responsibilities
- Monitor progress
- Review/assess progressive development of GFIS

Management Unit

- Rename to Coordinating Unit
- Promotion and partnership development
- Follow up implementation of work plan
- Ensure implementation of work plan
- Prepare proposal for funding

6. Next steps – a GFIS work plan

The IG discussed, outlined and agreed on the following work plan for the next six months:

A. Preparation of the GFIS Strategic/Business plan (IUFRO)

- Michael Hailu will report on outcomes of this IG meeting to the SC
- Based on outcomes of this meeting and recommendations from the SC meeting, IUFRO (Mikkola) will revise and finalize the GFIS Strategic/Business plan by end of December 2005
- Based on new information available on the final version of the GFIS Strategic/Business plan the GFIS promotion and marketing materials will be prepared

B. Updates on the GFIS gateway (FAO)

- Updates and development work should focus on key information types (for the moment news, meetings, job vacancies and publications).
- The freshest news, meetings and job vacancies should be displayed on the front page. In this context a new design for the front page was outlined and it was agreed that that should be implemented by end of 2005 (see Annex 3).
- Sorting of search results will be implemented based on the feedback received from users by the end of 2005 (see Annex 2).

- Before the design for the new GFIS front page will be implemented, the browse module will be moved to an appropriate place under main menu on the left. In this connection, usage of GFIS Google search will be investigated and if it is not utilized by users, it can be removed from the GFIS gateway. This will be done by end of November 2005.
- Guidelines on the control panel will be provided by end of November 2005.
- Possibility to provide user statistics from the GFIS gateway will be investigated.
- Possibility to capture of what user searches through GFIS will be investigated.
- How to develop detailed search for each information type will be investigated.

C. Information exchange standard development (CABI, FAO and NBII)

- Adoption of AGRIS AP for publications standard, CABI by end of 2005
- Publications metadata website, simplify AGRIS guidebook, CABI and FAO by end of 2005
- Explore metadata standard for datasets. NBII will prepare a proposal for datasets information exchange standard.

D. Partnership development and support (IUFRO)

- IUFRO President's invitation to provide metadata to GFIS to 100 IUFRO members will be sent in November 2005, and 80 per cent of those institutes should contribute in GFIS by March 2006.
- IUFRO President's letter to all IUFRO members, March 2006
- Contact to potential partners, potential partners listed under item 3.1 (end of 2005)
- Training for Asia partners in April 2006 (IUFRO, CIFOR)
- Invite CGIAR centres participation (CIFOR)

E. Promoting and marketing (IUFRO)

- Information providers are requested to prepare media release when they join in GFIS.
- All partners to be encouraged to have a link to the GFIS site.
- The IG partners should provide a plan for 2006 in which events (seminars, conferences) they would promote GFIS and, based on those plans, the common GFIS marketing plan will be prepared.
- Mail out GFIS brochure with newsletters, journals (CIFOR, CABI and NBII).
- GFIS Marketing materials (a fact sheet/brochure) will be updated when the GFIS Business plan is complete.

7. Other matters

It was discussed and agreed that an internal Web-based discussion group for the GFIS IG and SC should be established and IUFRO should prepare a proposal on how to establish that kind of forum for the GFIS core partners.

8. Next meeting

It was agreed that the coordinator should arrange a conference call for the IG bi-monthly, and the next IG meeting could be arranged in March 2006.

9. Closure of the meeting

Michael Hailu thanked all participants for the creative and open discussion and FAO for kindly hosting the meeting, and closed the meeting.

Annex 1

Additional GFIS service for U.S. GFIS partners

Hello U.S. GFIS partners,

I am pleased to inform you that the Global Forest Information Service (GFIS) was successfully demonstrated as a functional tool for the provision of information to the forestry community at the XXII IUFRO Congress in Brisbane, Australia, in August 2005. Through GFIS, it is now possible to provide and search for information about forest-related information resources, such as news, meetings and publications through one single entry point at www.gfis.net.

While this major step at the Congress could not have been taken without the successful cooperation between IUFRO and its partners in this initiative - FAO, CIFOR, CAB International and the UNFF Secretariat, the role of partners which provide information - like your organization - is crucial for the success of GFIS. In this respect I would like to express my appreciation that you have provided the first data sets (US FS R&D material) to GFIS for the World Forestry Congress in Quebec City already two years ago.

In this context I would like to inform you that NBII (www.nbii.org) was invited to become a new member in the GFIS Implementation Group (currently comprised of IUFRO, FAO, CIFOR, CAB International) which works on the partnership development and technical implementation of GFIS. The contact person within NBII will be Dr. Toral Patel-Weynand (Email: tpatel-weynand@usgs.gov, Tel. 703-648-4217, Fax 703-648-4224). Through this addition, NBII will serve as the regional GFIS support organization in the US to facilitate coordination related to GFIS and to provide an additional service for you.

Thank you again for your support to GFIS and your continued co-operation.

Best regards,
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Annex 2

Observations and Feedback on GFIS from information providers and users, August-October 2005

"It is great that GFIS service is now picking up 'live' information from providers which will bring in the users and even more providers."

Generally feedback from users and information providers has been positive and they've welcomed the new concept of GFIS, when users have understood what they can search through GFIS and when information providers have understood, how they can provide/link their metadata feeds to GFIS.

Metadata/RSS feed concept is not clear for everybody and lot of additional guidance has been needed through emails.

Information providers:

- Guidelines on the "GFIS Control panel" have been requested.
- GFIS keywords have been requested.
- Usage statistics on the GFIS site have been requested by current and especially potential information providers.
- "As the GFIS is a service by partners for partners, more interactivity seems desirable. E.g., a platform/forum for exchange on priority subjects among the partners; these could include general issues like the exploration/development of collaborative activities. This however requires active moderation of the information flow."

Users:

- Order of news items - latest first:
All news items listings should be listed in temporal order with the latest at the top, independently which category or organization was being listed.
- Choice Buttons for different types of feeds.
In the current interface users have to write "news" or "jobs" in the search field to find the news items. It is not obvious for a new user which categories there are available and should he/she types job or jobs. Suggestion by one user "You could create a button adjacent to the search box one for each type of RSS feed categories such as "News" or "Jobs" or "Events". By clicking one of these buttons the user will get a listing of the latest news, jobs or events. Events should be perhaps listed according to the date of the event (or last date of registration), not date of submission or announcement."
- Language:
There are now and will be more items with various languages mixed up in the listings. Language choice could be made available on the left hand menu and listings should be possible to make one language at a time.
- Dynamic front page
GFIS should import the xx latest items in RSS feeds up to the front page.

Annex 3

A proposal for a front page of GFIS gateway

Search GFIS for meetings, vacancies, news and publications provided by GFIS partners

Search _____

Forestry News

1. News I
2. News II
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

More news (link)

Forestry meetings

1. Meeting I
2. Meeting II
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

More meetings (link)

Forestry vacancies

1. Vacancy I
2. Vacancy II
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

More vacancies (link)

Publications searchable through GFIS (link)