**Modeling on the Grand Scale: Top Ten LANDFIRE Lessons Learned**

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Between 2004 and 2009, the LANDFIRE project developed state-and-transition models for all major Ecological Systems in the United States using the Vegetation Dynamics Development Tool (VDDT). To complete this effort, LANDFIRE staff:

- hosted modeling workshops, web conferences and individual meetings across the country,
- engaged more than 700 experts in developing and reviewing models,
- taught experts and managers how to model with VDDT, and
- facilitated the creation of over 2,000 models quantifying pre-settlement reference conditions.

An undertaking of this type invariably has highs and lows, and provides an opportunity to learn about the model building and model review process. Following are ten lessons we learned and a key link that can tell you more:

10- Be flexible when modeling: use workshops, one-on-one, web-conference, old-school flip charts.

9- It's well and good to learn by doing, but when collaborating, remember that YOU drive the process as needed. http://t.co/m8BB0Tu

8- When modeling, engage a broad spectrum of experts; they'll understand & create robust models. http://t.co/m8BB0Tu

7- Know what you're modeling. Sounds obvious, but don't kid yourself. :) Terminology is tricky. http://t.co/m8BB0Tu

6- Perform quality control on your models every step of the way. Automate when you can. http://bit.ly/fk8zfH

5- When modeling, don't start from scratch. Take the easy route: modify existing models. http://bit.ly/fk8zfH

4- Documenting work is like flossing: stay on top of your modeling health by tracking everything. http://t.co/m8BB0Tu

3- Stick to your purpose. When you're modeling, know what to keep in and what to leave out. http://t.co/m8BB0Tu

2- Models simplify reality. Yes, really! Be realistic, keep it simple and don't count the boxes. http://bit.ly/fk8zfH

1- Scratching your head regarding natural systems? LANDFIRE's done the work! Models for every US ecosystem http://bit.ly/fk8zfH