

Participatory Workshops with Experts on Fire Environments in Mexico to Generate Information on Forest Fuel Beds¹

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Abstract

Generation of information about fire environments and forest fuel beds is essential to know the behavior of wildfires. Developing experimental models in laboratories can be costly and time-consuming. One alternative is to take advantage of the empirical knowledge of people with experience in fire management and wildfire fighting. In order to collect empirical information on the fire environment to evaluate and describe forest fuel beds in different ecosystems in Mexico, four participatory workshops were held. These workshops were held in four venues covering the North, Central, West and South regions of Mexico in August, 2016. Fire management experts, mainly wildfire fighters with several years of experience, were invited. During the workshops, a theoretical proposal for a forest fuel bed (FFB) map for Mexico was presented. Based on this FFB map, the experts answered, in working groups of three to seven people, a questionnaire that sought to describe FFBs, fire behavior, an empirical fire behavior index, topography and weather. The four workshops were attended by a total of 108 experts in fire management and fighting, with a combined 1385 years of experience in the subject. The participants were mainly wildfire fighters belonging to federal government agencies. There were also representatives from universities and research centers, civil society organizations and private companies. The participants provided information for 55 forest fuel beds and identified forest fire risk and hazard polygons in 30 states of the country. At the moment, the workshop results are being systematized and analyzed; afterwards, it will be useful to compare them with the results generated by theoretical fire behavior models and risk and hazard models.

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