Introduction

Hi, my name is Greg Dillon and I'm a Spatial Fire Analyst.

I work for the Rocky Mountain Research Station

at the Missoula Fire Sciences Lab in Missoula, Montana.

Gregs background

So my background is in geography, and I didn't know until I was in college

that there were careers in geography, but I had always had an interest in maps

and a fascination with the natural world.

I had a professor who kind of nudged me in that direction and a Forest Service office nearby,

and so right out of school I got a job doing geographic information systems,

or GIS work for the Forest Service.

I knew that I wanted to be able to pair those tools with a subject like land management

or forest ecology, so focused on those in graduate school,

and through my Forest Service career I've been able to marry the subject matter

of land management with the tools that geography brings in all kinds of different projects.

Gregs current project

Some of the projects I'm working on right now revolve around wildfire risk assessments,

which is really all about strategic planning for land management and wildfire management,

and GIS is central to that because it deals with a lot of different types of spatial information.

So we take a lot of the fire behavior modeling work that's done at the fire lab here,

which is spatial in nature, and we can combine that with the locations of values at risk

on the landscape, homes, infrastructure, habitats, various things like that,

and calculate different measures of hazard and exposure to wildfire and wildfire risk.

So one thing that's really interesting and cool right now about the geographic technologies is

Mobile technology

that they've moved into the mobile world, and so I work on an incident management team

in the summer to help with managing fire incidents, and we're using mobile technology

to help firefighters collect information in the field on their devices,

that is synced up through the cloud to a system that we can access from fire camp,

and so it's almost like real-time information transfer and everybody's kept up-to-date.

That helps keep firefighters safe and it also helps to keep everybody informed

about what's happening on the ground.