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USING THE FOREST VEGETATION SIMULATOR AS A TEACHING TOOL

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ABSTRACT: The Forest Vegetation Simulator (FVS) is a tree-level, spatially non-explicit growth model. It is an outgrowth of the Stand Prognosis model that the U.S. Forest Service began developing in the late 1960s. Local variants of FVS now cover most of the forest types of the United States. Development of two complementary programs, Suppose and the Stand Visualization System (SVS), have opened the possibilities for using FVS as a teaching tool in forestry classes. Suppose provides a graphical user interface that eliminates the need for writing command line-level simulation scripts; SVS enables realistic visualization of stand structure and composition at any period in a simulation. Since 1995 we have used FVS to demonstrate silvicultural systems and provide hands-on practice in undergraduate silviculture courses. Modules for use in forest economics, forest pathology, and landowner education are under development. In early 2000, we developed Web-based lessons to complement a two-week silviculture laboratory module on FVS, Suppose, and SVS. The Web-based lessons save instruction time previously spent on orientation to the software and allow coverage of a greater range of topics during the two-week module than in previous years. The Web site has been expanded to include hyper-linked versions of the FVS keyword manual and USFS exercise manuals, and silviculture examples from a wide variety of forest cover types. This workshop will introduce instructors to the capabilities of FVS, Suppose, and SVS. Topics covered will include Web resources, data entry and organization, use of selected simulation keywords, visualization of results, and exporting text and graphics for use in other programs. Each participant will receive a CD-ROM that includes all programs necessary to run simulations with their own data.