

FESTF Endangered Species Assessment Tools: An Overview

The assessment tools comprising the FESTF data submissions provide documentation and consistency throughout the endangered species assessment process. They provide (1) an instrument for conducting a national-level species assessment and concurrently capturing new data, and (2) a starting point for species-specific and/or location-specific assessments when risk and management concerns cannot be met by the national-level assessment.

The FIFRA Endangered Species Task Force (FESTF) was formed as a limited liability corporation to address EPA/OPP's data requirements associated with pesticides and their potential impact on threatened and endangered (T&E) species. FESTF members and non-member companies who have met their data compensation obligations to FESTF are entitled to rely on FESTF-submitted data. The foundation of FESTF's effort is the development of work products that allow access to and facilitate use of existing information on T&E species. FESTF work products can be used to conduct individual national-level endangered species assessments that are required when any product exceeds an endangered species level of concern based on the results from a screening-level ecological risk assessment. FESTF's work products are:

- FESTF Information Management System (IMS) - an Information Management System whose basic function is to document and capture decisions that arise from the processes used by EPA/OPP to evaluate potential impacts of registered or reregistered products on T&E species (see MRID 46325901 and 46486301), and
- FESTF NatureServe's Multi-Jurisdictional Database (FESTF MJD) - a "licensed dataset" from NatureServe's Multi-Jurisdictional Database that provides detailed multi-state data (both biological and spatial) on T&E species (see MRID 46486301 and 47280101).

Documentation and quality testing for these data products are supported by the following data submissions:

- **MRID 46325901** - The FIFRA Endangered Species Task Force Information Management System (IMS): Documentation of Structure and Function of IMS 1.1 (July 19, 2004),
- **MRID 46486301**- The FIFRA Endangered Species Task Force Information Management System (IMS): Beta-Tested IMS 2.0 and Access to NatureServe Data (March 4, 2005), and
- **MRID 47280101** - NatureServe Data Evaluation and Review (October 22, 2007).

FESTF NatureServe's Multi-Jurisdictional Database (FESTF MJD)

The FESTF MJD provides access to data on T&E species aggregated at the national level. Data provided has been pre-qualified for use in this setting in a manner that meets the "best available data" standard of the Endangered Species Act.

NatureServe, along with its member Natural Heritage Programs and Conservation Data Centers, provides information about biological diversity and, on a national level, is considered to provide the "best available aggregated data" on federally listed species habitat and occurrence. FESTF MJD is an extensive database that contains location-specific information. Through a data license agreement between FESTF and NatureServe, access to a "licensed dataset" (a sub-set of data drawn from the MJD) is available to FESTF users and EPA users. Access is through a web-based data exploration system and map viewing window, both accessed through the password-protected FESTF MJD website. The data have been evaluated and additionally documented to

enhance the accuracy of their use for this application. Throughout the pesticide-endangered species assessment and risk management process, FESTF MJD data can be used to provide support for risk and management decisions. Details from data use and interpretation can be stored as documentation within the IMS for T&E species/county interactions.

FESTF Information Management System (IMS)

The IMS allows county-level comparisons of existing information on T&E species locations, so that these locations can be compared to potential pesticide usage at the county level. It captures assessment findings and subsequent risk management decisions in the form of “exclusions” from the need of concern and “protections” for situations requiring or having existing mitigations. The system also guides the user to provide intensive documentation regarding any findings related to the potential impact of a particular product on species of concern at the county level.

On a national level, the system contains the following county-level data:

- T&E species locations - provided from EPA/USFWS, and
- Crop locations - imported from the USDA Census of Agriculture.

The IMS enables the Registrant to query this information to obtain data relevant to a particular registration objective. For example, for a particular product, a Registrant can choose state(s) of interest, taxa (birds, mammals, dicots, monocots, etc.) of concern, and crops of interest for a particular pesticide. The IMS then generates information regarding which (if any) crops of concern and T&E species (within the chosen taxa) co-occur at the county level. This information can be used by the Registrant as a basis to begin a national-level T&E species assessment within the IMS.

The design of the IMS provides a mechanism for data updates, adding to and reporting on protections in use, as well as capturing spatial and temporal relationships that define whether or not there is a need to develop further protections. The system allows for thorough documentation of the species assessment process, so that conclusions and the uploaded documentation on which they are based can be stored, interactively reviewed during the action evaluation, and retrieved later. It not only allows the user to access information regarding T&E species/crop interactions at the county-level but also allows the user to enter unique T&E species information for each species/crop interaction within a given assessment. An electronic report on the findings can be generated by or submitted to EPA. The IMS provides EPA an efficient tool for development of its own assessment or for the review of information submitted by the Registrant. The IMS platform allows complex assessments to be conducted in a consistent manner, which is critical to achieving the clarity and documentation goals of endangered species assessment with respect to pesticide registration.

For more information, please see FESTF’s visitor page at <http://festf.org/visitors> or contact:

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