

Interactive comment on “A spatial database of wildfires in the United States, 1992–2011” by K. C. Short

Anonymous Referee #1

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General Comments

The author describes the production of a U.S. interagency Fire-occurrence Database (FOD) from numerous U.S. federal, state, and local wildfire records from 1992-2011. The database is the product of a very substantial effort to “acquire, standardize, error-check, compile, and scrub” the disparate fire reports, and should provide an enormous benefit to those attempting a spatial analysis of U.S. wildfire activity over the past 20 years. The removal of duplicate records alone (which accounted for a whopping 22 million ha of redundant burned area in the original data) is enough to make the production of the FOD an extremely worthwhile endeavor.

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The topic is appropriate for ESSDD and will be of interest to readers. The manuscript is well written and generally easy to follow. Although the FOD has some very significant limitations due to problems in the underlying fire records used to produce the database, these limitations are acknowledged and well documented in the manuscript. I have no significant concerns about the work and recommend publication following the relatively minor clarifications and technical corrections noted below.

Specific Comments

Page 307, line 20: As an aside, retaining eight decimal places for latitudes and longitudes (i.e., ~1 mm precision) seems absurdly precise for fire locations.

Page 319, section 2.3: As acknowledged in the manuscript, the evaluation is imperfect since the reference estimates are also derived from incomplete and potentially inconsistent fire reports. Though not essential for the present work, it would probably be worth comparing the FOD against a remotely-sensed national or global burned area data set (as in, for example, Giglio et al., 2010, *Biogeosciences*). Remote sensing data sets will of course have their own limitations, but can serve as a completely independent source of reference data.

Page 323, line 22: What fraction of burned area in the FPA FOD resides in the land that is mapped as not burnable in the LANDFIRE data set?

Technical Corrections

Page 299, line 4: “on” → “upon”.

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Page 304, line 4: “for 1986 to 1996” → “from 1986 through 1996”.

Page 308, line 1, etc.: I don’t understand the meaning of the phrase “cross-walked”.
Do you perhaps mean “cross referenced” or “cross checked”?

Page 311, line 28: “enlist it” → “enlist this field”.

Page 319, line 11: By “rolled-up” do you mean “compiled”?

Interactive comment on Earth Syst. Sci. Data Discuss., 6, 297, 2013.

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