Distribution and Dynamics of Aboveground Biomass in Second Growth Tropical Forests of Puerto Rico

Douglas Morton\textsuperscript{1*}, Sebastian Martinuzzi\textsuperscript{1,2}, Michael Keller\textsuperscript{3,4}, Bruce Cook\textsuperscript{1}, and Eileen Helmer\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{1}NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, MD
\textsuperscript{2}University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI
\textsuperscript{3}USDA Forest Service, International Institute of Tropical Forestry, San Juan, PR
\textsuperscript{4}NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, CA
\textsuperscript{5}USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fort Collins, CO

Contact: douglas.morton@nasa.gov

BER Program: TES
Project: NGEE-Tropics

Large-scale agricultural abandonment in the 20th century created a mosaic of second growth forests across the island of Puerto Rico, distributed across a range of topographic, edaphic, and climatic conditions. Here, we combined forest inventory data and remote sensing products from the NASA Goddard Lidar, Hyperspectral, and Thermal (G-LiHT) Airborne Imager (www.gliht.gsfc.nasa.gov) to evaluate biomass accumulation in second growth forests across gradients of forest age, soils, and climate. A total of 78 Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) plots from the USDA Forest Service across the island, measured in 2016 and 2017, were combined with G-LiHT lidar data from 2017 to model biomass as a function of lidar-derived forest structure. Research plots from state and national forest lands were used to evaluate the lidar-biomass model for older second growth and mature forest types. In addition, 2017 G-LiHT data were compared with existing lidar coverage from 2011 and 2013 to estimate changes in canopy structure from branch and tree fall events over four to seven-year intervals. Lidar data offer a novel constraint on the size and frequency distributions of canopy change, in combination with estimated forest mortality from inventory plots. The information presented here is a key step towards improving the representation of tropical forest dynamics in ecosystem models, including the mechanics of forest succession that determine biomass accumulation in second-growth forests.