atlas@work

ATLAS

www.atlastech.co.nz

Providing integrated forest management and modelling software

July 2008

Sunrise captured by Christian Pilaar on an early morning trip to visit users in Gisborne.

It was good to catch up with so many of you over the last month at the user group meetings. Everybody learns something in these sessions, often just from listening to how others do things operationally. I know that we certainly do, and it is always interesting to see how people use our programs “in anger” (this is developer speak for “the real world” – hopefully users are not always angry).

This quarter we are using the newsletter to showcase some of the software we have been developing over the last six months with other units within Scion, including the Wall Calculator and The Fire Behaviour Toolbox. Another example of a collaborative project with a number of units across Scion is the TIMBRs / Cruiser inventory project, where we analysed data captured using a single tree sampling method (Z-plotting) and compared it with bounded plot data in Cruiser.

The end of this month will be Marika’s last with ATLAS, as she moves into a science role within the forestry team at Scion. Marika has been a great addition to our team, and has been active with software testing, project work, and keeping us organised and focused around support issues. Certainly we will miss her, as I’m sure will many clients who have regular contact with Marika. However, we wish her well and look forward to having a new face to introduce in the next newsletter.

In November 2005 we held a GeoMaster User Group meeting in Canberra. It is timely to consider having another user group meeting in Australia, since our Australian client base continues to expand. The tentative date would be mid November, and the location probably either Melbourne or Albury (NSW). We would not plan as extensive an itinerary as last time (that trip lasted 5 days). If you are interested in attending the meeting in Australia, please let us know so we can get our planning under way.

We would also host a meeting around the same time in Rotorua, for our New Zealand clients, although they would be most welcome to join us in Australia.

Sarah Heine
General Manager

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Supported Operating Systems

Windows 2000

ATLAS will drop support for Windows 2000 in June 2009. The main reasons for this are that Windows 2000 is unsupported by Microsoft (i.e. there aren't any more service packs available for it) and Version 3 of the .NET Framework is unsupported on Win 2000. Currently the bulk of ATLAS applications use Version 2 of the .NET Framework and hence cannot use any of the features available in version 3 of the Framework.

Vista

ATLAS applications are supported under Vista. We have tested the bulk of our applications under Vista and they installed and ran successfully. A few minor problems were encountered and had to be worked around (e.g. Forecaster by default attempts to write to the root of C: drive and required the OutputFolder option to be changed under Tools | Options). There was also a problem with starting the licensing service under Vista (and Windows Server 2008) which has been corrected. Usually this service is deployed on a server operating system so this only affected single user installations.

A New Release of FieldMan

Version 2.3 of FieldMan has been released, and is available from the FieldMan support page on our website. The major new features it brings are:

- the ability to specify a name when creating a new data row in the editor (using F1), for example, when creating a new Plot in Cruiser.
- an option to swap the contents of two plots – useful when stem data has been recorded under the wrong plot.

Also included in the release is a new utility program for simply viewing the contents of FDB files. This allows you to navigate through, and directly inspect the data in any FDB file, something that has not always been easy using FieldMan on the PC.

NZ Fire Behaviour Toolkit

A new application just released is Scion's NZ Fire Behaviour Toolkit. The fuel and fire behaviour models developed by Scion's Rural Fire Research Group have been incorporated into a user-friendly software package by ATLAS Technology.

The toolkit has a number of modules designed to assist fire managers in their decision making by predicting fire behaviour (such as intensity and rate of spread) from the topography, vegetation types, and present and forecasted weather conditions.

External Wall Calculator

The External Wall Calculator is currently under development in conjunction with Scion. This life cycle analysis (LCA)-based tool is designed to measure the environmental impact of typical timber framed external wall systems in New Zealand.

One of the main benefits of the wall calculator is the ability to compare different wall designs based on the R-Value. The R-Value is a measurement of the insulating properties of a wall.

User Group Meeting

The recent meeting for users of our modelling and related software (Cruiser, FieldMan, YTM, Forecaster, and Harvest Scheduler) was well attended, and led to some useful discussions on future enhancements to these products. Some key suggestions for particular products included:

FieldMan: The ability to uniquely name audit plots so that they can be analysed separately in Cruiser; support for single stem sampling; a review of alternative hardware options to Allegros.

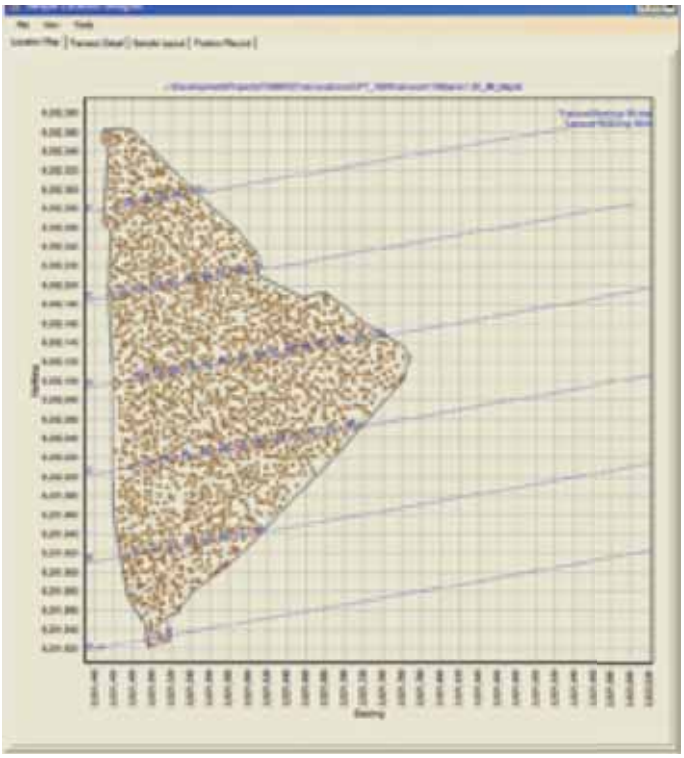
Cruiser: The ability to run analyses on age ranges rather than harvest dates; conversion to .NET so that the models used in Forecaster are available to Cruiser.

Forecaster: Recording of crop history for use by the 300 index growth model and by wood quality models; the ability to identify crop and non-crop trees in a stem list.

Yield Table Manager: The ability to run a series of processes in batch mode; the ability to automate the linking of yield tables to harvest areas in Harvest Manager.

Harvest Scheduler: The ability to filter the selection of yield cubes; importing of harvest units from Harvest Manager.

Andrew Gordon described how, as a result of recent technological advances, single stem sampling is now a viable alternative to plot-based sampling. Single stem assessments were carried out using equi-spaced transects and Z-Plotting to plan a suitable sampling strategy. TIMBRS (developed at CSIRO) was used to generate tree counts from satellite imagery, and ATLAS Cruiser to analyse the plots. The results showed improved estimates of standing volume when compared with traditional plot-based inventory of the same stands. Contact ATLAS for more information about this project or any of the other products mentioned above.



Stem locations obtained from TIMBRS; Transects superimposed to identify stems to sample.

Marika's Musings

As most of you have noticed, the re-licensing of ATLAS software started a few weeks ago. If you haven't been given a new licence yet, but an expiry message pops up every time you start the program, please contact **software.support@atlastech.co.nz**

There is a new version of Cruiser that is about to be released, which allows the analysis of regime matrices to grow back in time to a specified age. This new feature is only suitable for growth models that allow backwards growth and is triggered on age. The regime can only be grown back from a clearfell event, but not through silvicultural operations such as pruning and thinning.

July is not only the start of a new financial year, but is also the beginning of a new chapter for me, as I will be moving from my job at ATLAS to a forestry science role at Scion. Being Software Support at ATLAS has been a wonderful experience and I very much enjoyed working with an amazing team that has taught me so much.

Thank you to all the ATLAS clients who were so very patient with me, especially when I first started. You made this role challenging, interesting and exciting and I will miss the customer focus of the ATLAS job.

Now that I will become one of the ATLAS users we will hopefully catch up at the next ATLAS user group meeting. Until then feel free to contact me via email if you have any questions or just want to say hello (**marika.fritzsche@scionresearch.com**).

Vielen Dank und für die Zukunft alles Gute,
Marika

GeoMaster Update

This quarter was highlighted by another GeoMaster User meeting and a new release of GeoMaster/Harvest Manager (v1.11). Significant new features in this release include:

- A tool that enables multiple events to be edited concurrently
- The ability to archive harvest areas that are no longer active
- A tool for displaying the area of an arbitrarily digitised polygon (along with areas of any stands falling within the polygon)
- The ability to provide just read-only access to third party applications (eg Microsoft Excel or Access) which can directly open GeoMaster tables, even if the user has full access when using GeoMaster.

A key feature of the User Meeting was the presentation of a prototype web interface for GeoMaster developed in collaboration with Geographic Business Solutions. This option could offer significant savings for companies with large numbers of GIS licences. We intend to have an implementation of this available by the end of the year, enabling read-only GIS access and standard GeoMaster event management via a web browser.

Image from GeoMaster Online prototype

This year we welcome two new Australian clients who will be implementing GeoMaster in the near future. Forest Enterprises Australia (FEA) and Willmott Forests are both MIS (Managed Investment Scheme) companies that purchase land, plant, and manage forests on behalf of a large base of investors. This business model places new demands on GeoMaster and will help make it relevant to the growing MIS sector within the industry.