

2.0 Methods

2.1 Study area

The study area (Figure 1) is Canada's forests region which comprises of boreal, great lakes, acadian, carolinian, subalpine, columbia, montane and coastal forest. Tree species within the zone are generally conifers such as black spruce, white spruce, Tamarack, balsam fir and jack pine while deciduous trees within the zone includes Aspen, balsam poplar and paper birch. The climate of Canada's forest varies but it is mainly characterized by cold winters and short summer (Brandt, 2009), although we are beginning to observe more warmer winter due to climate change. The mean temperature in Canada's boreal forests ranges 10°C- 20°C and this varies from region to region (Zhang et al., 2019)



Figure 1: Canada's forests regions (Natural resource Canada)

Wildfire is the major standing disturbance within Canada's boreal forest and also other forest region with more than 2 Mha burn annually on average (Stocks et al., 2002) although this range varies from year to year. To determine areas that burned, a burned area map derived using a support vector machine learning algorithm will be used to identify area burned. To determine the areas that are primarily forests, a land cover map will be used to stratify the various land cover types. A land cover map will be used to stratify the areas of various landcover classes.

2.2 Field data

2.2.1 Field combustion area

To estimate the amount of C loss across Canada's major disturbances, Field combustion measurements for the year 2014 and 2015 as shown in Figure 2 were acquired from a number of publications that carried out combustion measurement within Canada's boreal forests and published online as a single database (Walker et al., 2020a).

This field measurements resulted in 456 plots and were used with other predictor variables to estimate C loss from Canada's boreal forest fires.

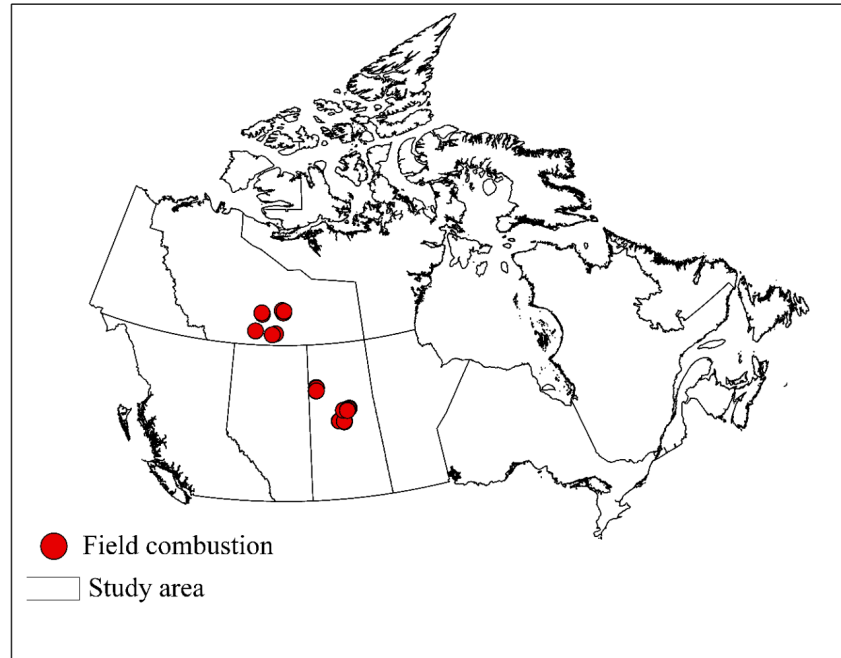


Figure 2: Field combustion area

2.2.2 Burned-area, harvest and insect disturbance mapping

Disturbance map across the entire study area will be derived using a random forest approach where we integrated different spectral indices, spectral bands and environmental variables. A threshold value established from literature and other field collected disturbance sites will be used on the final disturbance product to identify each disturbance type (fire, harvest and insect infestation) within Canada's forests.

##2.3 Combustion models

2.3.1 Predictor variables

Field combustion measurements for aboveground and belowground C loss were obtained from Walker et al. (2020) and related to gridded environmental, fire severity and remotely sensed variables of combustion (Figure 3).

The predictor variables of combustion used in this study were selected first by spanning across the literature and also discussing with experts and also further validated with a selection from random forests.

2.3.1.2 Climate variables Climate variables used in this study were obtained from Climate NA. Climate NA provides monthly, seasonal and yearly gridded climate data. This data was used to generate climate impact of C combustion within Canada's boreal forests.

2.3.1.3 Environmental variables Aboveground combustion from fire depends on a lot of top tree influence. The environmental variables that we will use for this research include elevation, Soil properties,

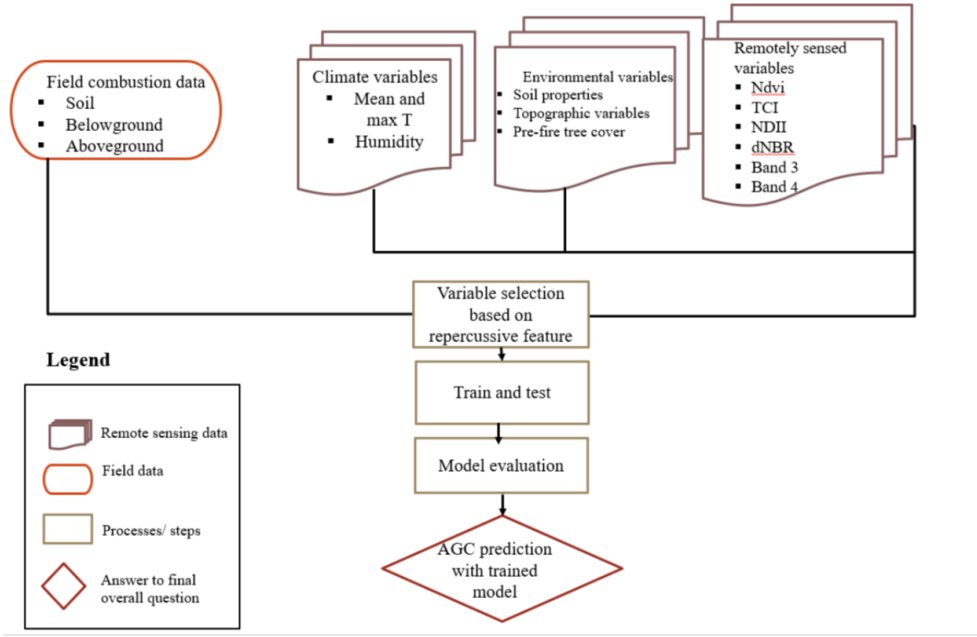


Figure 3: method to map C emissions from disturbance

slope, aspect, and pre-fire tree cover. The elevation data will be obtained from the Advanced Spaceborne and Thermal Emission and Reflectance Radiometer Global Digital Elevation Model (ASTER GDEM), and then slope and aspect will be derived in ArcGIS or R USING THE DEM.

Prefire tree cover plays a huge factor and influences below and aboveground combustion. Tree cover influences biomass fuel for burning and it is also a measure of tree stand. Studies have found out that tree cover correlates with C loss (Rogers et al., 2014). The pre-fire tree cover used in this study will be obtained from Sexton et al. (2013) for the year 2011 and it will serve as the pre-fire tree cover for our combustion model.

The differenced normalised burn ratio (dNBR) assesses changes in fire impacted vegetation using the near and shortwave infrared reflectance (Key & Benson, 2004). dNBR will also be included as a predictor variable as studies have found out that dNBR correlates significantly with biomass loss. Spectral bands of Landsat 1-9 will be downloaded from the USGS and the NIR and SWIR bands will be used for deriving NBR ($(NIR_{SWIR}) / (NIR + SWIR)$). dNBR will be computed as the difference between pre-fire and post-fire NBR.

2.3.1.4 Remotely sensed variables Remotely sensed variables used for this study were all derived from Landsat 7 and 8. This includes Landsat bands 1-9, the normalised differenced vegetation indices (NdVI), the topographic wetness index, Tasseled cap indices, and the Landsat dNBR.