

NASA/TM—2000–209891, Vol. 213



## **Technical Report Series on the Boreal Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study (BOREAS)**

*Forrest G. Hall and Sara Conrad, Editors*

**Volume 213**

### **BOREAS TF-11 Decomposition Data over the SSA-Fen**

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Greenbelt, Maryland 20771

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November 2000

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# **BOREAS TF-11 Decomposition Data over the SSA-Fen**

David Valentine

## **Summary**

The BOREAS TF-11 team collected several data sets in its efforts to fully describe the flux and site characteristics at the SSA-Fen site. This data set contains decomposition rates of a standard substrate (wheat straw) across treatments. The measurements were conducted in 1994 as part of a 2 x 2 factorial experiment in which we added carbon (300 g/m<sup>2</sup> as wheat straw) and nitrogen (6 g/m<sup>2</sup> as urea) to four replicate locations in the vicinity of the TF-11 tower. The data are stored in tabular ASCII files.

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## **1. Data Set Overview**

### **1.1 Data Set Identification**

BOREAS TF-11 Decomposition Data over the SSA-Fen

### **1.2 Data Set Introduction**

This data set contains decomposition rates of a standard substrate (wheat straw) across treatments. The measurements were conducted as part of a 2 x 2 factorial experiment in which we added carbon (300 g/m<sup>2</sup> as wheat straw) and nitrogen (6 g/m<sup>2</sup> as urea) to four replicate locations in the vicinity of the Tower Flux (TF)-11 tower.

### **1.3 Objective/Purpose**

Much of the area within the boreal forest biome consists of wetlands, in which large carbon stores and high water tables drive fundamentally different atmospheric interactions than occur under the other forest types studied by the BOREal Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study (BOREAS). One key difference is in the form carbon is emitted following soil microbial respiration; in wetlands, much of it is emitted as methane. Wetlands are the dominant influence of boreal forests on atmospheric methane.

This study was undertaken in order to assess responses of methane emissions in northern wetlands to potential changes in plant productivity, nitrogen availability or both. Whiting and Chanton (1993) recently observed that methane emissions from wetlands across the globe are well related to net primary productivity (NPP). This may be for a variety of reasons, including enhanced plant transport, increased methanogenic substrates from root exudates, increased litter input cascading to enhanced substrate availability for methanogenesis, or enhanced C and N mineralization of decomposing residues. Previous work by us (Valentine et al., 1994) and others has shown that substrate availability is a key constraint on methane production in wetlands. The present study was an effort to test whether substrate manipulation results from laboratory studies could be mirrored under field conditions.

### **1.4 Summary of Parameters**

We report the mass loss of a standard plant material (wheat straw) over the course of ~50 days as a function of treatment and location. We also report the initial and final concentrations of carbon and nitrogen (mass basis).

### **1.5 Discussion**

These data were collected from a set of small locations within the fen, and therefore no one location represented the entire study site. In fact, the fen in which this work was conducted was characterized by a large-scale gradient of vegetation, microtopography, and hydrology such that the study site itself is representative only of the portion of the fen in which it was located (i.e., the lower 1/3).

### **1.6 Related Data Sets**

BOREAS TE-06 Biomass Estimate Data

BOREAS TE-18 Biomass Density Image of the SSA

BOREAS TGB-03 Plant Species Composition Data over the NSA-Fen

## **2. Investigator(s)**

### **2.1 Investigator(s) Name and Title**

David Valentine

Assistant Professor

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University of Alaska

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### **2.2 Title of Investigation**

Influence of Substrate Characteristics and Other Environmental Factors on Methane Emissions from the BOREAS Southern Study Area Fen Site. III. Standard Litter Decomposition

## **2.3 Contact Information**

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Raytheon ITSS  
Code 923  
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Greenbelt, MD 20771  
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(301) 286-0239 (fax)  
Jeffrey.Newcomer@gsfc.nasa.gov

## **3. Theory of Measurements**

Litter bags were constructed from fiberglass screen to hold ~3 g of plant material. Once filled with wheat straw and weighed, they were placed within each of the treatment/location replicates and allowed to remain for ~50 days. They were then collected and reweighed, and the fraction of the original weight remaining is reported in the accompanying file.

## **4. Equipment**

### **4.1 Sensor/Instrument Description**

Not applicable.

#### **4.1.1 Collection Environment**

The litter bags were set out around the end of July (21-Jul or 02-Aug-1994), then retrieved on 17-Sep-1994. Half the bags were placed on the surface of the peat, and half were inserted 0.1 m below the surface.

#### **4.1.2 Source/Platform**

Not applicable.

#### **4.1.3 Source/Platform Mission Objectives**

Recent papers (e.g., Whiting and Chanton, 1993) have suggested that CH<sub>4</sub> emissions are positively related to plant productivity. One possible mechanism by which enhanced NPP or other factors may result in higher CH<sub>4</sub> emissions is through enhanced decomposition rates, perhaps indexing a more rapid substrate supply rate from fermentative processes. We therefore wanted to evaluate whether enhanced litter decomposition rates (i.e., mass loss) covaried with CH<sub>4</sub> emissions rates or varied as a function of our C and N additions.

#### 4.1.4 Key Variables

Name	Unit	Description
----	----	-----
FRAC	Not applicable	Fraction of wheat straw mass remaining
C	Not applicable	C fraction of wheat straw
H	Not applicable	H fraction of wheat straw
N	Not applicable	N fraction of wheat straw

#### 4.1.5 Principles of Operation

Not applicable.

#### 4.1.6 Sensor/Instrument Measurement Geometry

Not applicable.

#### 4.1.7 Manufacturer of Sensor/Instrument

Not applicable.

### 4.2 Calibration

#### 4.2.1 Specifications

Not applicable.

##### 4.2.1.1 Tolerance

Not applicable.

#### 4.2.2 Frequency of Calibration

Not applicable.

#### 4.2.3 Other Calibration Information

Not applicable.

## 5. Data Acquisition Methods

Approximately 3 g of wheat straw was sealed into each fiberglass mesh screen. Oven dry equivalent weights for each were determined based on additional subsamples. Two replicate bags for each treatment/platform combination were either laid on the surface or inserted 0.1 m into the peat near the end of July, then collected in mid-September. Each bag was oven-dried at 30 °C for 48 h, then weighed. Subsamples were ground and analyzed using a Leco CHN analyzer for C, H, and N concentrations.

Subsamples from the initial (undecomposed) wheat straw were similarly analyzed for C, H, and N concentrations:

```
C_ADDED,N_ADDED,DURATION,REPLICATE_ID,LITTER_MASS_FRACTION,C_CONC,H_CONC,N_CONC
Initial,0,0,0,0,0,0,1,.446,.061,.005
```

## 6. Observations

### 6.1 Data Notes

Vegetative growth lifted some of the bags off the peat surface during the decomposition period, and the resultant drying likely retarded those.

### 6.2 Field Notes

None.



## 7. Data Description

### 7.1 Spatial Characteristics

#### 7.1.1 Spatial Coverage

All measurements were made along two transects identified by their location relative to the TF-11 micrometeorology tower: a north transect (NA and NB platforms) and a south transect (SA and SB platforms). All measurements were made within 70 m of the TF-11 tower, whose North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83) coordinates are 53.80206°N, 104.61798°W.

#### 7.1.2 Spatial Coverage Map

Not available.

#### 7.1.3 Spatial Resolution

The data are from point measurements at the given locations.

#### 7.1.4 Projection

Not applicable.

#### 7.1.5 Grid Description

Not applicable.

### 7.2 Temporal Characteristics

#### 7.2.1 Temporal Coverage

Litter bags were placed either on 21-Jul-1994 (north transect) or 02-Aug-1994 (south transect). All bags were collected on 17-Sep-1994.

#### 7.2.2 Temporal Coverage Map

None.

#### 7.2.3 Temporal Resolution

Ideally, the litter bags would have been placed at the beginning of the growing season. Because of a miscommunication from the Principal Investigator (PI) to the field crew, the bags were not placed until much later than optimal.

### 7.3 Data Characteristics

#### 7.3.1 Parameter/Variable

The parameters contained in the data files on the CD-ROM are:

```
Column Name
-----
SITE_NAME
SUB_SITE
START_OBS_DATE
END_OBS_DATE
PEAT_DEPTH
C_ADDED
N_ADDED
DURATION
REPLICATE_ID
LITTER_MASS_FRACTION
C_CONC
H_CONC
```

N\_CONC  
 SITE\_COMMENTS  
 CRTFCN\_CODE  
 REVISION\_DATE

### 7.3.2 Variable Description/Definition

The descriptions of the parameters contained in the data files on the CD-ROM are:

Column Name	Description
SITE_NAME	The identifier assigned to the site by BOREAS, in the format SSS-TTT-CCCCC, where SSS identifies the portion of the study area: NSA, SSA, REG, TRN, and TTT identifies the cover type for the site, 999 if unknown, and CCCCC is the identifier for site, exactly what it means will vary with site type.
SUB_SITE	The identifier assigned to the sub-site by BOREAS in the format GGGGG-IIIII, where GGGGG is the group associated with the sub-site instrument, e.g. HYD06 or STAFF, and IIIII is the identifier for sub-site, often this will refer to an instrument.
START_OBS_DATE	The date and time at which collection of the referenced data commenced.
END_OBS_DATE	The date and time at which collection of the referenced data was terminated.
PEAT_DEPTH	The depth below the peat surface.
C_ADDED	Estimated amount of carbon contained in the wheat straw that was added to the plot.
N_ADDED	Estimated amount of nitrogen contained in the urea that was added to the plot.
DURATION	Duration of time that the samples were in the field since 21-JUL-94 or 02-AUG-94.
REPLICATE_ID	Replicate id, where 2 denotes a replicate.
LITTER_MASS_FRACTION	Fraction of original litter mass remaining.
C_CONC	Carbon concentration of remaining littermass
H_CONC	Hydrogen concentration of remaining littermass
N_CONC	Nitrogen concentration of remaining littermass
SITE_COMMENTS	Descriptive information to clarify or enhance the site information.
CRTFCN_CODE	The BOREAS certification level of the data. Examples are CPI (Checked by PI), CGR (Certified by Group), PRE (Preliminary), and CPI-??? (CPI but questionable).
REVISION_DATE	The most recent date when the information in the referenced data base table record was revised.

### 7.3.3 Unit of Measurement

The measurement units for the parameters contained in the data files on the CD-ROM are:

Column Name	Units
SITE_NAME	[none]
SUB_SITE	[none]
START_OBS_DATE	[none]
END_OBS_DATE	[none]
PEAT_DEPTH	[millimeters]
C_ADDED	[grams C] [meter <sup>-2</sup> ]
N_ADDED	[grams C] [meter <sup>-2</sup> ]
DURATION	[days]
REPLICATE_ID	[unitless]
LITTER_MASS_FRACTION	[unitless]
C_CONC	[grams C] [grams litter <sup>-1</sup> ]
H_CONC	[grams H] [grams litter <sup>-1</sup> ]
N_CONC	[grams N] [grams litter <sup>-1</sup> ]
SITE_COMMENTS	[none]
CRTFCN_CODE	[none]
REVISION_DATE	[DD-MON-YY]

### 7.3.4 Data Source

The sources of the parameter values contained in the data files on the CD-ROM are:

Column Name	Data Source
SITE_NAME	[Assigned by BORIS Staff]
SUB_SITE	[Assigned by BORIS Staff]
START_OBS_DATE	[Investigator]
END_OBS_DATE	[Investigator]
PEAT_DEPTH	[Investigator]
C_ADDED	[Investigator]
N_ADDED	[Investigator]
DURATION	[Investigator]
REPLICATE_ID	[Investigator]
LITTER_MASS_FRACTION	[Balance]
C_CONC	[Leco CHN analyzer]
H_CONC	[Leco CHN analyzer]
N_CONC	[Leco CHN analyzer]
SITE_COMMENTS	[Investigator]
CRTFCN_CODE	[Assigned by BORIS Staff]
REVISION_DATE	[Assigned by BORIS Staff]

### 7.3.5 Data Range

The following table gives information about the parameter values found in the data files on the CD-ROM.

Column Name	Minimum Data Value	Maximum Data Value	Missng Data Value	Unrel Data Value	Below Detect Limit	Data Not Cllected
SITE_NAME	SSA-FEN-FLXTR	SSA-FEN-FLXTR	None	None	None	None
SUB_SITE	9TF11-DEC01	9TF11-DEC07	None	None	None	None
START_OBS_DATE	21-JUL-94	02-AUG-94	None	None	None	None
END_OBS_DATE	17-SEP-94	17-SEP-94	None	None	None	None

PEAT_DEPTH	0	100	None	None	None	None
C_ADDED	0	300	None	None	None	None
N_ADDED	0	6	None	None	None	None
DURATION	46	58	None	None	None	None
REPLICATE_ID	1	2	None	None	None	None
LITTER_MASS_FRACTION	.64	1.14	None	None	None	None
C_CONC	.361	.469	None	None	None	None
H_CONC	.05	.063	None	None	None	None
N_CONC	.002	.008	None	None	None	None
SITE_COMMENTS	N/A	N/A	None	None	None	None
CRTFCN_CODE	CPI	CPI	None	None	None	None
REVISION_DATE	01-OCT-98	01-OCT-98	None	None	None	None

---

Minimum Data Value -- The minimum value found in the column.

Maximum Data Value -- The maximum value found in the column.

Missng Data Value -- The value that indicates missing data. This is used to indicate that an attempt was made to determine the parameter value, but the attempt was unsuccessful.

Unrel Data Value -- The value that indicates unreliable data. This is used to indicate an attempt was made to determine the parameter value, but the value was deemed to be unreliable by the analysis personnel.

Below Detect Limit -- The value that indicates parameter values below the instruments detection limits. This is used to indicate that an attempt was made to determine the parameter value, but the analysis personnel determined that the parameter value was below the detection limit of the instrumentation.

Data Not Clctd -- This value indicates that no attempt was made to determine the parameter value. This usually indicates that BORIS combined several similar but not identical data sets into the same data base table but this particular science team did not measure that parameter.

Blank -- Indicates that blank spaces are used to denote that type of value.

N/A -- Indicates that the value is not applicable to the respective column.

None -- Indicates that no values of that sort were found in the column.

---

## 7.4 Sample Data Record

The following are wrapped versions of data record from a sample data file on the CD-ROM.

```
SITE_NAME,SUB_SITE,START_OBS_DATE,END_OBS_DATE,PEAT_DEPTH,C_ADDED,N_ADDED,
DURATION,REPLICATE_ID,LITTER_MASS_FRACTION,C_CONC,H_CONC,N_CONC,SITE_COMMENTS,
CRTFCN_CODE,REVISION_DATE
'SSA-FEN-FLXTR','9TF11-DEC01',21-JUL-94,17-SEP-94,0,300,6,58,1,.87,.446,.061,
.002,'North of Tower, along transect A','CPI',01-OCT-98
```

## **8. Data Organization**

### **8.1 Data Granularity**

The smallest unit of data tracked by the BOREAS Information System (BORIS) is the measurement(s) made for a given site on a given day.

### **8.2 Data Format(s)**

The Compact Disk-Read-Only Memory (CD-ROM) files contain American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) numerical and character fields of varying length separated by commas. The character fields are enclosed with single apostrophe marks. There are no spaces between the fields.

Each data file on the CD-ROM has four header lines of Hyper-Text Markup Language (HTML) code at the top. When viewed with a Web browser, this code displays header information (data set title, location, date, acknowledgments, etc.) and a series of HTML links to associated data files and related data sets. Line 5 of each data file is a list of the column names, and line 6 and following lines contain the actual data.

## **9. Data Manipulations**

### **9.1 Formulae**

Not applicable.

#### **9.1.1 Derivation Techniques and Algorithms**

None.

### **9.2 Data Processing Sequence**

#### **9.2.1 Processing Steps**

None.

#### **9.2.2 Processing Changes**

None.

### **9.3 Calculations**

#### **9.3.1 Special Corrections/Adjustments**

None.

#### **9.3.2 Calculated Variables**

Not applicable.

### **9.4 Graphs and Plots**

None.

## **10. Errors**

### **10.1 Sources of Error**

The most obvious source of error was the tendency for the litter bags to be lifted above the peat surface by vegetative growth, potentially retarding decomposition through excessive drying. Other sources of error include solubilization of straw constituents resulting in overstatement of decomposition rate, exclusion of soil fauna by the bag screen itself, and moss or other growth in the bag causing a mass gain during the period.

## **10.2 Quality Assessment**

### **10.2.1 Data Validation by Source**

Not applicable.

### **10.2.2 Confidence Level/Accuracy Judgment**

Except for the bags that gained weight during the decomposition period, these data appear fairly robust. The aforementioned gainers should be deleted prior to analysis.

### **10.2.3 Measurement Error for Parameters**

Not applicable.

### **10.2.4 Additional Quality Assessments**

None given.

### **10.2.5 Data Verification by Data Center**

Data were examined for general consistency and clarity.

## **11. Notes**

### **11.1 Limitations of the Data**

See Sections 9.1 and 10.1.

### **11.2 Known Problems with the Data**

None given.

### **11.3 Usage Guidance**

See Sections 9.1 and 10.1.

### **11.4 Other Relevant Information**

None given.

## **12. Application of the Data Set**

Several avenues are being pursued in publications now being produced to answer the following questions:

- How do CH<sub>4</sub> flux measurements compare by technique used in measurement?
- How and why do CH<sub>4</sub> flux measurements vary through time and across the landscape?
- Does plant productivity limit CH<sub>4</sub> emissions?

## **13. Future Modifications and Plans**

None.

## **14. Software**

### **14.1 Software Description**

We used only commercially available software, mostly the Quattro Pro spreadsheet.

### **14.2 Software Access**

Not applicable.

## **15. Data Access**

The decomposition data are available from the Earth Observing System Data and Information System (EOSDIS) Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) Distributed Active Archive Center (DAAC).

### **15.1 Contact Information**

For BOREAS data and documentation please contact:

ORNL DAAC User Services  
Oak Ridge National Laboratory  
P.O. Box 2008 MS-6407  
Oak Ridge, TN 37831-6407  
Phone: (423) 241-3952  
Fax: (423) 574-4665  
E-mail: [ornldaac@ornl.gov](mailto:ornldaac@ornl.gov) or [ornl@eos.nasa.gov](mailto:ornl@eos.nasa.gov)

### **15.2 Data Center Identification**

Earth Observing System Data and Information System (EOSDIS) Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) Distributed Active Archive Center (DAAC) for Biogeochemical Dynamics  
<http://www-eosdis.ornl.gov/>.

### **15.3 Procedures for Obtaining Data**

Users may obtain data directly through the ORNL DAAC online search and order system [<http://www-eosdis.ornl.gov/>] and the anonymous FTP site [<ftp://www-eosdis.ornl.gov/data/>] or by contacting User Services by electronic mail, telephone, fax, letter, or personal visit using the contact information in Section 15.1.

### **15.4 Data Center Status/Plans**

The ORNL DAAC is the primary source for BOREAS field measurement, image, GIS, and hardcopy data products. The BOREAS CD-ROM and data referenced or listed in inventories on the CD-ROM are available from the ORNL DAAC.

## **16. Output Products and Availability**

### **16.1 Tape Products**

None.

### **16.2 Film Products**

None.

### **16.3 Other Products**

These data are available on the BOREAS CD-ROM series.

## **17. References**

### **17.1 Platform/Sensor/Instrument/Data Processing Documentation**

None.

### **17.2 Journal Articles and Study Reports**

Klinger, L.F., P.R. Zimmerman, J.P. Greenberg, L.E. Heidt, and A.B. Guenther. 1994. Carbon trace gas fluxes along a successional gradient in the Hudson Bay lowland. *Journal of Geophysical Research* 99:1469-1494.

Newcomer, J., D. Landis, S. Conrad, S. Curd, K. Huemmrich, D. Knapp, A. Morrell, J. Nickeson, A. Papagno, D. Rinker, R. Strub, T. Twine, F. Hall, and P. Sellers, eds. 2000. *Collected Data of The Boreal Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study*. NASA. CD-ROM.

Sellers, P. and F. Hall. 1994. *Boreal Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study: Experiment Plan*. Version 1994-3.0, NASA BOREAS Report (EXPLAN 94).

Sellers, P. and F. Hall. 1996. *Boreal Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study: Experiment Plan*. Version 1996-2.0, NASA BOREAS Report (EXPLAN 96).

Sellers, P., F. Hall, and K.F. Huemmrich. 1996. *Boreal Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study: 1994 Operations*. NASA BOREAS Report (OPS DOC 94).

Sellers, P., F. Hall, and K.F. Huemmrich. 1997. *Boreal Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study: 1996 Operations*. NASA BOREAS Report (OPS DOC 96).

Sellers, P., F. Hall, H. Margolis, B. Kelly, D. Baldocchi, G. den Hartog, J. Cihlar, M.G. Ryan, B. Goodison, P. Crill, K.J. Ranson, D. Lettenmaier, and D.E. Wickland. 1995. The boreal ecosystem-atmosphere study (BOREAS): an overview and early results from the 1994 field year. *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*. 76(9):1549-1577.

Sellers, P.J., F.G. Hall, R.D. Kelly, A. Black, D. Baldocchi, J. Berry, M. Ryan, K.J. Ranson, P.M. Crill, D.P. Lettenmaier, H. Margolis, J. Cihlar, J. Newcomer, D. Fitzjarrald, P.G. Jarvis, S.T. Gower, D. Halliwell, D. Williams, B. Goodison, D.E. Wickland, and F.E. Guertin. 1997. BOREAS in 1997: Experiment Overview, Scientific Results and Future Directions. *Journal of Geophysical Research* 102(D24): 28,731-28,770.

Valentine, D.W., E.A. Holland, and D.S. Schimel. 1994. Ecosystem and physiological controls over methane production in northern wetlands. *Journal of Geophysical Research* 99(D1):1563-71.

Whiting G.J. and J.P. Chanton. 1993. Primary production control of methane emission from wetlands. *Nature* 364:794-5.

### **17.3 Archive/DBMS Usage Documentation**

None.

## **18. Glossary of Terms**

None.



## 19. List of Acronyms

ASCII	- American Standard Code for Information Interchange
BOREAS	- BOReal Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study
BORIS	- BOREAS Information System
CD-ROM	- Compact Disk-Read-Only Memory
DAAC	- Distributed Active Archive Center
EOS	- Earth Observing System
EOSDIS	- EOS Data and Information System
GIS	- Geographic Information System
GSFC	- Goddard Space Flight Center
HTML	- HyperText Markup Language
NAD83	- North American Datum of 1983
NASA	- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NPP	- Net Primary Productivity
NSA	- Northern Study Area
ORNL	- Oak Ridge National Laboratory
PANP	- Prince Albert National Park
PBR	- Productivity/Biomass Ratio
PI	- Principal Investigator
SSA	- Southern Study Area
TE	- Terrestrial Ecology
TF	- Tower Flux
TGB	- Trace Gas Biogeochemistry
URL	- Uniform Resource Locator

## 20. Document Information

### 20.1 Document Revision Date

Written: 29-Jan-1997

Last Updated: 06-Aug-1999

### 20.2 Document Review Date(s)

BORIS Review: 08-Oct-1998

Science Review:

### 20.3 Document ID

### 20.4 Citation

When using these data, please include the following acknowledgment as well as citations of relevant papers in Section 17.2:

Valentine, D.W. 1996. Influence of substrate characteristics and other environmental factors on methane emissions from the BOREAS Southern Study Area fen site. III. Standard litter decomposition.

If using data from the BOREAS CD-ROM series, also reference the data as:

Valentine, D., "Influence of Substrate Characteristics and Other Environmental Factors on Methane Emissions from the BOREAS Southern Study Area Fen Site. III. Standard Litter Decomposition." In Collected Data of The Boreal Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study. Eds. J. Newcomer, D. Landis, S. Conrad, S. Curd, K. Huemmrich, D. Knapp, A. Morrell, J. Nickeson, A. Papagno, D. Rinker, R. Strub, T. Twine, F. Hall, and P. Sellers. CD-ROM. NASA, 2000.

Also, cite the BOREAS CD-ROM set as:

Newcomer, J., D. Landis, S. Conrad, S. Curd, K. Huemmrich, D. Knapp, A. Morrell, J. Nickeson, A. Papagno, D. Rinker, R. Strub, T. Twine, F. Hall, and P. Sellers, eds. Collected Data of The Boreal Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study. NASA. CD-ROM. NASA, 2000.

## **20.5 Document Curator**

## **20.6 Document URL**

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE November 2000		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Technical Memorandum
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Technical Report Series on the Boreal Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study (BOREAS) BOREAS TF-11 Decomposition Data over the SSA-Fen			5. FUNDING NUMBERS  923 RTOP: 923-462-33-01	
6. AUTHOR(S) David W. Valentine Forrest G. Hall and Sara Conrad, Editors				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS (ES)  Goddard Space Flight Center Greenbelt, Maryland 20771			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER  2000-03136-0	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS (ES)  National Aeronautics and Space Administration Washington, DC 20546-0001			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER TM—2000—209891 Vol. 213	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES  D.W. Valentine: University of Alaska, Fairbanks; Sara Conrad: DynCorp				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Unclassified—Unlimited Subject Category: 43 Report available from the NASA Center for AeroSpace Information, 7121 Standard Drive, Hanover, MD 21076-1320. (301) 621-0390.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)  The BOREAS TF-11 team collected several data sets in its efforts to fully describe the flux and site characteristics at the SSA-Fen site. This data set contains decomposition rates of a standard substrate (wheat straw) across treatments. The measurements were conducted in 1994 as part of a 2 x 2 factorial experiment in which we added carbon (300 g/m <sup>2</sup> as wheat straw) and nitrogen (6 g/m <sup>2</sup> as urea) to four replicate locations in the vicinity of the TF-11 tower. The data are stored in tabular ASCII files.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS BOREAS, tower flux, decomposition data.			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 14	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL	

