

Abundant Forests Alliance

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AMERICA'S FORESTS IN STATE OF RENEWAL AND RE-GROWTH, BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN, LANDMARK REPORT FINDS

Society of American Foresters Finds "Abundant Forest Resources" Throughout Country

Washington, DC – The United States of America is covered by 750 million acres of forestland, an amount that has remained essentially unchanged over the past 100 years, reports a landmark new study released today by the Society of American Foresters (SAF). In addition, forestland in the United States has increased by more than 10 million acres over the past 20 years. The report is available for viewing or downloading at <http://www.safnet.org/>.

The new study found that replanting and reforestation efforts have helped keep forestland stable. Four million new trees are planted every day. In addition, increasing demand for forest products has provided powerful incentive for investment by private landowners to reforest after harvest. Also, natural forest re-growth on abandoned agricultural lands has generally offset any loss of forestland during the 20th century due to urban/suburban growth. Technological advances have made farming more efficient, vastly reducing the amount of land needed to produce food, therefore allowing forestland to regenerate, according to the report.

Former USDA Forest Chief Dale Bosworth wrote the report's introduction and notes, "There is much good news to be shared about America's forests, particularly in regard to their abundance, the ecological services and recreational services they offer, the raw materials they provide, and the successful initiatives to sustain them."

The State of America's Forests reports there is good reason to believe that the positive trends will continue. "Most encouraging of all, perhaps, is not what has already been accomplished, but what is likely to be achieved by forestry and natural resources professionals in the future," the study concludes. "Scientific discoveries occur almost every day, and these advances are leading to developments in biofuels, forest and biodiversity conservation, tree farming and production, environmentally sound building materials, fire management, and controls for insect and disease outbreaks -- successes that will enhance our efforts to conserve, re-grow and use the forest more effectively than we do today."

"As a truly renewable resource, the trees in our forests can continually re-grow themselves, especially when given proper management and care," said Chuck Leavell, Rolling Stones keyboardist, family forest owner and award-winning author. "Coinciding with increased *Green* discussion across the country, this report -- together with other recent studies -- shows that our rigorous reforestation efforts, combined with advances in agricultural and forestry technology, are allowing us to keep our forests healthy, growing and abundant. This is something we can all be proud of."

The State of America's Forests shows that forests "represent one of the greatest renewable resources...When forests are managed in a sustainable manner, forest production can commonly meet the landowner's economic objectives while also protecting the environment." While the report notes that America's forests face significant challenges -- such as fire, insects and disease, invasive weeds, unmanaged recreation and land conversions -- it documents a variety of reasons to be optimistic about our nation's forestland:

(more)

- Annual net growth of U.S. forests is 36 percent higher than the volume of annual tree removals.
- Historical trends indicate that the standing inventory (volume of growing stock) of hardwood and softwood tree species in U.S. forests increased by 49 percent between 1953 and 2006.
- Certification of sustainable forest management continues to increase every year. The three major U.S. certification systems (Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council and American Tree Farm System) “together certify more than 107 million acres, representing 14 percent of total U.S. forests. Some 25 percent of private US forestland is now certified.”
- Sustainable forest management is contributing to carbon sequestration and storage. In the United States, the total carbon sequestered by forests and the creation of wood products during the 1990s reached almost 200 megatons per year – around 10 percent of U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide from burning fuels.
- The stability and abundance of forestland, together with the growing conservation ethic of the American public over the past century, has helped many species on the brink of extinction (e.g., wild turkey, elk) make full recoveries.

The new report is a comprehensive, peer-reviewed analysis of a wide variety of data regarding forestland in the United States from a broad range of sources, including the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The report was authored by forestry expert Mila Alvarez, a professor at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute’s College of Natural Resources and the principal of Solutions for Nature, a natural resources management consulting firm. The Abundant Forests Alliance provided major funding for the SAF study.

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About the Society of American Foresters

The Society of American Foresters is a national non-profit scientific and educational organization and the largest professional society for foresters in the world. SAF’s mission is to advance the science, education, technology and practice of forestry and to ensure the continued health and use of forest ecosystems and the present and future availability of forest resources to benefit society.

About the Abundant Forests Alliance

Members of the wood and paper products industry in the United States formed the Abundant Forests Alliance. We share information with consumers and customers about the many ways our industry is helping to ensure that with proper care and management there will always be abundant forests. We also listen and respond to environmental concerns about our forests and products. Through sustainable forestry practices, improved recycling and new technologies, our industry is helping to maintain the delicate balance between supplying the wood and paper products people need and giving the forest what it needs to flourish.

Our members include: Anthony Forest Products Company | Green Diamond Resource Company | International Paper | MeadWestvaco | Monadnock Paper Mills | Plum Creek Timber Company | Temple-Inland | The Westervelt Co. | Weyerhaeuser

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