

Changing Times - Changing Forests

The forests of Maryland are maturing and never before have so many people lived in them. The pressure on forest resources to meet all the needs for open space, forest products, wildlife habitat and human needs has never been higher. The USDA Forest Service conducts periodic forest inventories of all states to provide up-to-date information on forest resources. Inventories of Maryland's forest resources were conducted in 1950, 1964, 1975, 1986 and 1999. The following *Branching Out* article attempts to break down the most recent inventory (1999) and explain the current status of our forests as well as compare trends.

Private forestland owners own 78% of the timberland in Maryland

That's a bold statement. The future stewardship of Maryland's forests lies not in the hands of government, but in decisions by over 130,000 private forest stewards who have the privilege and responsibility to manage our forest resources. The number of owners has increased dramatically over the last decade, as forest and farm parcels are broken up. The average forest acreage is about 17 acres, with 75 percent of the parcels under 10 acres in size. Individuals own 51 percent of the timberland, followed by corporations with 17 percent, and farmers, 10 percent.

Forestland is being lost to development

In 1986, 42.3 percent of the land was forested on 2.64 million acres. By 1999, the amount of acres dropped to 2.57 million acres or 41 percent being forested. Most of this was lost to development. While the southern, western

and lower eastern shore counties tend to be more heavily forested than the state average, the seven counties near the Baltimore/Washington corridor (Cecil, Harford, Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, P.G., and Anne Arundel) have an average forest cover of only 33 percent. However, 17 percent of this land is classified as urban forestland, where forest management practices are more difficult to conduct now and will be more so in the future.

Our forests are maturing

The USDA Forest Service classifies forests as sawtimber (with the average tree diameter greater than 11 inches at 4.5 feet from the ground), poletimber (average tree diameter from 5-11 inches) or seedling-sapling (trees less than 5 inches in diameter). Most of the forests were harvested at the turn of the century or abandoned from agriculture and are from 70 to 100 years old.

Forests of sawtimber size now make up 66 percent of Maryland's forests, compared to 60 percent in 1986. Poletimber-sized forests now only occupy 21 percent, compared to 29 percent in 1986. Sapling-seedling forests occupy 12 percent, similar to that in 1986. Our forests continue to mature and are now at a size where commercial timber harvesting is viable. Sound forest stewardship practices that sustain the resource for future generations is essential. This is why forest landowners should use the services of a professional forester before harvesting forest products.

The maturing forest impacts on wildlife habitat. Species

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that require young forest habitat (known as early forest successional habitat) have seen serious declines as their habitat has disappeared. (See *Branching Out* Vol. 9, no. 4.) The creation of early forest habitat can greatly increase the diversity of wildlife on a forest property.

Volume of wood in all trees is increasing

There was a 7 percent volume (cubic feet) increase for all species of trees between 1986-99. Those with the highest increase include sweetgum with a 36 percent increase, ash/walnut/cherry with a 33 percent increase and red maple with a 25 percent increase. Yellow-poplar had a 15 percent increase.

The current volume of sawtimber is 16,161 billion board feet or 6,797 board feet per acre (a board foot is a measure of how much wood standing trees will produce after being harvested and sawn). This is a 14 percent increase from 1986 and reflects how forests continue to age and grow in size.

Growth higher than removal

The sustainable harvest of forest products is essential to provide periodic income from forestland and maintain vigorous and healthy ecosystems. The net growth of the forests of Maryland is 106,791 thousand cubic feet on an annual average basis, while 82,655 thousand cubic feet is being removed. About 36,543 thousand cubic feet of the growing stock dies annually for various reasons. The good news: the rate at which the volume of wood in our forests grew, exceeded that which was removed or died. This occurred for all species except red oak in Garrett County, and much of this loss was due to mortality and/or harvesting of timber from gypsy moth after the last inventory in 1986. Yellow-poplar was the winner in terms of overall growth with 3 times more growth compared to removals.

The new forest landowner

One-third of forest landowners purchased their property since 1978. Reasons for owning forestland vary among owners. From a survey done in 1994 by the USDA Forest Service, the following reasons surfaced: part of the home: 27%; esthetics: 16%; part of the farm: 15%; recreation: 13%; investment: 7%; farm/domestic: 8%; timber 3%; and other: 13%. Another survey of Pennsylvania citizens dispelled the myths that private forest landowners are anti-environmentalists, timber-oriented and against all regulations. In general, private forest landowners are increasingly more educated, new to land ownership, aging, absentee, environmentally minded,

nonfarmers, and open to reasonable regulations.

Harvesting decisions are being made

According to the USDA survey on "Private Forestland Owners of the Northern United States, 1994," about half of the private forest landowners had harvesting experience. Respondents stating that they intend to harvest in the next 10 years account for an estimated 35 percent of private forest landowners and 61 percent of the private acreage.

According to the same national survey, only 5 percent of the private forestland owners have a written management plan and they control 29 percent of the private forests in the northern United States. However, Maryland has a better record than this. A forest stewardship plan provides the landowner with a detailed list of the forest's resources as well as recommended practices to help meet their goals. Forest landowners who develop a forest stewardship plan, with the assistance of a licensed professional forester before making forest harvest decisions, will make better stewardship decisions. With the average land tenure of forestland in Maryland at 12 years, it is essential that short-term harvest decisions do not impair the land for future generations.

Maryland's forests are changing as are the people who own them. Education of landowners regarding forest stewardship is essential, but so is the education of decision makers to maintain incentives and management opportunities for forest-based industries. The forest industry is an essential partner in the management of forestland, providing markets and sources of income that are essential to maintain our open-space; a resource owned not by government, but by private landowners.

For information on the Forestry Inventory & Analysis report conducted by the USDA Forest Service, log onto www.fs.fed.us/ne/fia/.



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Small Woodland Owners Working Together

It's no mystery that shopping malls, strip developments, new homes and highways are replacing our woods at an ever-increasing rate. As forests are continually being divided into smaller and smaller parcels, implementing forest harvest practices becomes more difficult.

The Problems with Multiple Small Parcels

A survey done by The Sampson Group found that the average size of the amount of land owned by the private forest landowner in 1994 is about 24 acres, and is expected to decrease to 16 acres by 2010. Maryland is already at 17 acres. According to the same survey, smaller forest parcels:

- are more expensive to manage for forest products
- get less money for their timber
- may find their management activities constrained (e.g., prescribed fire)
- may get taxed for development values and
- are more likely to be sold for development.

So what should landowners do to accomplish timber harvesting on small parcels?

Small forest parcels may lack the volume of timber needed to attract a commercial logging contractor. It's time for landowners to get to know their neighbors in an effort to work together to create harvesting opportunities. In many cases, owners of adjacent properties can work together to improve management and reach shared goals.

Forestry consultant Harry Staley of Forestry Concepts is hired by private forest owners to market timber and to develop forest stewardship plans. He conducted 8 timber sales in 2001 that required adjacent landowners to work together, a sign that the realities of smaller parcels are being felt by landowners who wish to carry out forest harvests. He explains, "There comes a point of no return where it costs more to bring equipment onto the land than the actual cost of the timber. Combined timber sales are intended to help the small woodland owner."

Harvest recommendations in forest stewardship plans are used to accomplish objectives such as improving wildlife habitat, removing trees and maintaining vigorous growth. However, harvest recommendations are of little value if there isn't enough timber volume to attract a commercial logger or if there is no industry to provide a market for those products.

Benefits of Forest Harvesting

- Natural events such as damage by gypsy moth, storm damage, and other factors provide an opportunity to harvest forest products and receive some revenue that would otherwise be lost.
- The thinning of a forest that is crowded will allow the remaining trees to grow faster in diameter.
- Some forest types, such as Virginia pine, are short-lived and will decline if not harvested.
- Harvests can create needed types of wildlife habitat on the property.
- Harvesting can provide income for life's special needs such as a child's education, retirement or the start of a business.

Forest Industry and Landowners Need Each Other

The wood products industry provides the markets that allow landowners to market forest products and keep our forests working. Our region grows some of the best hardwood and pine in the world, which is highly sought after. The wood products industry is the fifth largest industry in the state. It is the largest industry in western Maryland and the second largest industry on the lower Eastern Shore. Over 18,000 people are employed in the wood products industry statewide. In 1987, over 362,000 tons of primary wood products such as logs, lumber, wood pulp and waste paper with a value of \$138 million were exported out of the Port of Baltimore. Our general economy realized \$28 for every \$1 of income from the sale of timber by a landowner.

Wood is removed from Maryland's forests for a variety of products, such as building lumber, shipping crates, veneer for shelving and furniture, chips for fuel and particle board, and pulp for paper. Nearly all of the forest land in Maryland is capable of growing trees that are suitable for wood products.

There is concern that economic development authorities and well-meaning regulatory agencies do not recognize the mutually important relationship of forest landowners and the wood products industry. One depends on the other.



Web Watch...

Discount Prices on Logging Supplies & Arborist Tools:

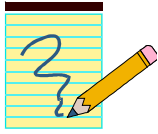
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Small Scale Logging Equipment - Pruning and Reforestation

Tools: www.forestind.com/forestrytech;



Take Note

- **Using Fertilizers in the Culture of Christmas Trees** - 2nd Edition by Thom J. McEvoy is now available for \$13 + \$3.50 SH. To place an order, call 802-434-3839.
- **Working Forest Conservation Easements** - By Brenda Lind, is now available for \$30. To place an order, call 202-638-4725 or go to www.lta.org.

Partnership for Sustainable Forestry A Survey of Maryland Voters - 2002

A recent survey of Maryland voters found that a large majority (78 percent) support the state's sustainable multi-benefit forest management policies that provide both "environmental and economic returns to the state." These benefits include environmental returns like "...wildlife, clean water and air, recreation, open space... as well as economic returns from tourism, timber and other activities."

By a margin of nearly two to one, Maryland voters support the harvesting of timber in the four state forests. Statewide, 57 percent supported the harvesting of timber, 30 percent were opposed and 13 percent were undecided. Support for the harvesting of timber was the strongest in the Eastern Shore/Southern Maryland regions with 67 percent and in the Western Maryland regions with 60 percent. The leading employer of these areas is the forest products industry. A majority of voters in each region support the state's policies, with the exception of Montgomery County where the supporters (46 percent) outnumbered those who opposed (41 percent).

The survey was conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc., from January 15 - 17, 2002.

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Please send changes of address.

See page 2 for addresses and phone number.

Upcoming Stewardship Events

April 19 & 20: Mid-Appalachian IWLA Council, Fourth Annual Spring Conference, Gaithersburg. Contact Jim Baird 301-548-0150, ext. 207 or jimb@iwla.org.

May 11: Forest Management for the Long-Term, Shepherd's Spring Retreat Center, Sharpsburg, MD. Targeted to land trusts interested in incorporating forest stewardship into conservation easements. Contact Cindy Mason, 301-432-2767, ext. 301, ct11@umail.umd.edu.

May 11: Forestry Field Day, Stronghold Forest Demonstration Area, Sugarloaf Mountain, Dickerson, MD, 9 a.m. The field day will focus on the different timber management techniques available in that area. Contact Mike Kay, DNR Forest Service, 301-473-8417.

June 6: Estate planning for forest landowners, State College, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Targeted towards those who deal with estate planning and tax issues and who may want to use the course as a teaching tool. Contact Mike Jacobson at mj2@psu.edu.

July 28-31: Walnut Council International Meeting, Clarion Hotel, Hagerstown, MD. Contact Phil Pannill, 301-791-4010.

Forest-Wildlife Volunteer Training

This fall, 30 Coverts Cooperators will learn how sound forest management practices can improve wildlife management and other forest benefits from forestland. Each year, a select group of 30 woodland owners, managers, and/or environmentally concerned individuals is accepted to participate in a 3-day training seminar. All meals, lodging, training and reference materials are paid for by the Ruffed Grouse Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to forest wildlife conservation. In exchange, participants agree to become Coverts Project Cooperators and return to their communities to share what they have learned with others.

Applications are now being accepted and the deadline is June 21, 2002. For more information, to download an application or to look at a past training agenda, log onto www.naturalresources.umd.edu or call Vera Mae Schultz at 301-432-2767, x310.





Take Note

New Book on Working Forests Easements Available

Working forest conservation easements protect open space values and economic and community benefits that arise from a forest's production of goods and services. In part, they strip specified development rights from a property. Available for \$30 from the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). The book provides advice and basic requirements for working forest conservation easements and a range of acceptable approaches from a variety of organizations.

Additionally, the 48-page book contains recommended tools for guiding forest management, a range of approaches for requiring forest management plans and information on baseline documentation and easement monitoring.

The text is a result of an LTA-sponsored April 2000 "learning circle" of experts, including landowners and easement holders who examined how conservation easements can best protect forested landscapes and their productive capacity. The book can be ordered by calling 202-638-4725 or by logging onto www.lta.org.