



DISTRIBUTION OF FOREST LAND

The distribution of the total forest area of the 48 States as estimated by the U.S. Forest Service as of 1953 is shown on the accompanying map. This is the most recent map available showing the distribution of the total forest area.

In estimating the acreage of forest land area, the Forest Service used the following definition of forest land:

Forest land area includes (a) lands which are at least 10 percent stocked by trees of any size and capable of producing timber or other wood products, or of exerting an influence on the climate or the water regime; (b) land from which the trees described in (a) have been removed to less than 10 percent stocking and which have not been developed for other use; (c) afforested areas; and (d) chaparral areas. It does not include orchard land. The minimum area that qualifies as forest land is 1 acre in the East and 10 acres in the West. Roadside, streamside, and shelterbelt strips of timber, in addition to meeting the above requirements, must be at least 120 feet wide to qualify as forest land.

It is important to note that chaparral areas are included under this definition. The chaparral land area is defined by the Forest Service as including "lands supporting heavily branched dwarf trees or shrubs, usually evergreen, the crown canopy of which covers more than 50 percent of the ground and whose primary value is watershed protection."

Approximately three-fourths of the total forest area in the 48 contiguous States was classified as commercial forest land. (Classification of the total forest area of Alaska and Hawaii has not yet been completed.) The noncommercial area is made up mainly of unproductive and unreserved woodland and forest land. However, about 27 million acres (including 11 million unproductive acres) are reserved for special purposes such as parks and wildlife refuges.

Commercial forest land is made up of all forest land which (1) is producing, or physically capable of producing, usable crops of wood (usually sawtimber or pulpwood), (2) economically available now or prospectively, and (3) not withdrawn from timber utilization.

In appraising the commercial value of forest land in different parts of the United States, it is particularly important to recog-

nize the varying rates of growth associated with differences in climate, soil, topography, drainage, and other conditions. The growth rates for forests in central Alaska or northern Maine are strikingly different from those for Georgia and Louisiana, for example. Thus not only total acreage but the productivity of our forest land must be carefully considered in planning for the Nation's long-range needs for wood products.

The total forest and woodland area for the 50 States, as of July 1960, was approximately 774 million acres, according to the forest inventory of the U.S. Forest Service. Of this total forest and woodland area, 132 million acres are located in Alaska. Hawaii has about 2 million acres of forest and woodland.

The regional distribution of the forest land area reported by the Forest Service as of 1953 and 1960 is shown by the accompanying table. It should be pointed out that the Forest Service carries out the inventory of forest resources on a continuous basis. Not all parts of the United States have yet had a complete forest inventory. On the other hand, in those States where forest land is of major importance and where marked changes in the acreage and composition of the forest are occurring, two and even three inventories have been completed during the past 25 years.

FOREST LAND AREA IN UNITED STATES, BY REGIONS, 1953 AND 1960¹

Region	Forest land	
	1953	1960
	<i>1,000 acres</i>	<i>1,000 acres</i>
Northeast.....	66,365	66,892
Corn Belt.....	31,229	31,349
Lake States.....	55,201	54,614
Northern Plains.....	5,752	5,377
Appalachian.....	69,307	70,202
Southeast.....	79,818	77,860
Delta States.....	51,809	54,170
Southern Plains.....	48,037	38,150
Mountain.....	143,498	144,288
Pacific.....	96,670	96,580
48 conterminous States.....	647,686	639,482
Alaska.....	(2)	132,314
Hawaii.....	(2)	2,000
United States (50 States).....		773,796

¹ As reported by the U.S. Forest Service. Changes between 1953 and 1960 are in part due to the availability of more detailed surveys for some areas in 1960.
² Not available.