

You can learn more about how your land can contribute to forest sustainability by contacting your State Forester's office or local Cooperative Extension Service. Landowners can also benefit by using a professional forester to help them write forest management plans.

**For More Information**

Copies of the Sustainability Assessment Highlights are available at [www.na.fs.fed.us/sustainability](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/sustainability), as well as from State Forester's offices and the USDA Forest Service.

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**Forest Sustainability—**

*Taking Measures Now to Ensure*

*Healthy Forests for the Future*

*Forests are critical to  
America's environmental,  
social, and economic vitality*



*Many of the goods and  
services that Americans  
depend upon have their roots  
in forests*

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Delaware 302-739-4811	Michigan 517-335-4225	Pennsylvania 717-787-2703
Illinois 217-782-2361	Minnesota 651-296-4484	Rhode Island 401-647-3367
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What does the future hold for our forests? Will they remain healthy and continue to protect water and support jobs? Will we lose more land to development? In short, are forests managed *sustainably*, that is, are they currently used in ways that meet today's needs without sacrificing the needs of future generations?

## Assessing Forest Sustainability

The United States is assessing sustainability and the effects of forest management using an internationally recognized monitoring system. The system addresses seven *criteria* that outline important ecological, social, and economic values of forests.

State Foresters in the 20 Northeastern and Midwestern States and the USDA Forest Service have adopted the seven criteria as sustainable forest management goals to help guide program and policy decisions.

The seven criteria are:

**Conservation of biological diversity**—maintaining a variety of plants and animals, and their environments. Diversity helps plant and animal populations adapt to change.

**Maintenance of productive capacity of forest ecosystems**—assessing the extent of forests and whether they can produce wood as well as nonwood forest products such as mushrooms, maple syrup, and berries.

**Forest ecosystem health**—evaluating forest and tree health, considering the effects of insects and diseases, tree age, storms, fires, and air pollution.

**Conservation of soil and water resources**—determining whether soil is being managed to hold nutrients and prevent erosion, and if the water we depend upon is adequately protected.

**Maintenance of forest contribution to global carbon cycles**—estimating how much carbon is held in forests and harvested wood. Actively growing trees remove carbon from the atmosphere as they take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen, which reduces the greenhouse effect (the gradual heating of the world's atmosphere).

**Maintenance and enhancement of long-term multiple socio-economic benefits to meet the needs of society**—measuring the direct benefits that forests produce: forest recreation, wood products, and other products such as maple syrup, Christmas trees, and medicinal plants.

**Legal, institutional, and economic framework for forest conservation and sustainable management**—reviewing laws and regulations, urban and rural development patterns, demographic changes, international trade, and similar factors to see if they tend to support or detract from forest sustainability.

## Sustainability Reporting—Northern United States

The *Sustainability Assessment Highlights for the Northern United States* was recently released. This summary report is based on the first review of the region's forests using criteria of sustainability. The report gives scientists an important "snapshot" of today's forests that will become even more valuable in the future.



Experts plan to measure the same criteria every 5 years so they can spot changes—good or bad. Foresters, policymakers, landowners, and the public will have the information they need to correct factors that could threaten sustainability.

Facts about Northern United States forests:

- ✧ Nearly 76 million people drink water that comes from forested watersheds.
- ✧ More than 612,000 workers earn paychecks that are tied to forestry, resulting in an annual payroll of over \$19 billion.
- ✧ Millions of people enjoy fall foliage and forest recreation.
- ✧ Stewardship of northern U.S. forest land resides with the nearly 3.9 million forest landowners as well as Federal, State, and local units of government.
- ✧ About 4 of every 10 acres are forested.
- ✧ Ninety percent of native plant and animal species monitored in the Northern United States are faring well, compared with 67 percent nationally.
- ✧ Fourteen insects and 8 diseases imported to the region have become serious, persistent pests including chestnut blight, Dutch elm disease, and gypsy moth.
- ✧ Roughly 94 percent of the region's forests, 159 million acres, are capable of growing marketable timber should the landowners choose to do so.

## Taking Action

Practicing forest sustainability is not just for natural resource professionals and landowners. To get involved, people can:

- ✧ Encourage wise community development that conserves open space and a healthy "urban forest" while providing new homes and businesses
- ✧ Promote laws, regulations, and taxes that support forest land conservation and sound forest management activity
- ✧ Support funding for projects that help scientists assess and understand forests
- ✧ Help keep forests healthy by minimizing transport of tree-killing