



Virginia
Department of Forestry

VIRGINIA FORESTS

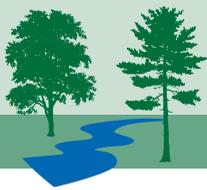


State Assessment
and
Strategic Plan



August 2010





Virginia Department of Forestry

Purpose

As part of the 2008 Farm Bill, Congress directed that all 50 state forestry agencies conduct a comprehensive examination of their forest resources and any potential threats to those resources. Each review was to focus on three national themes (conserve working forests; protect forests from harm, and enhance public benefits from trees and forests). In addition, each review would be a collaborative process with multiple stakeholders involved; coordinated with other federal-level plans; assess trends and conditions, and identify key issues and priority areas, including multi-state issues. The agencies were given two years to conduct their studies and report their findings, which were due to the US Forest Service on June 18, 2010. The resulting companion documents are the state assessments and the strategic plans.

Under the direction of the State Forester of Virginia, a team of Virginia Department of Forestry employees worked together for about 18 months to examine every facet of the forest resource in the Commonwealth. More than 400 citizens representing more than 50 groups and organizations generously gave of their time to provide vital input, ask important questions and offer excellent suggestions to make Virginia's assessment the best and most comprehensive it could be.

Virginia's Forest Trends and Conditions

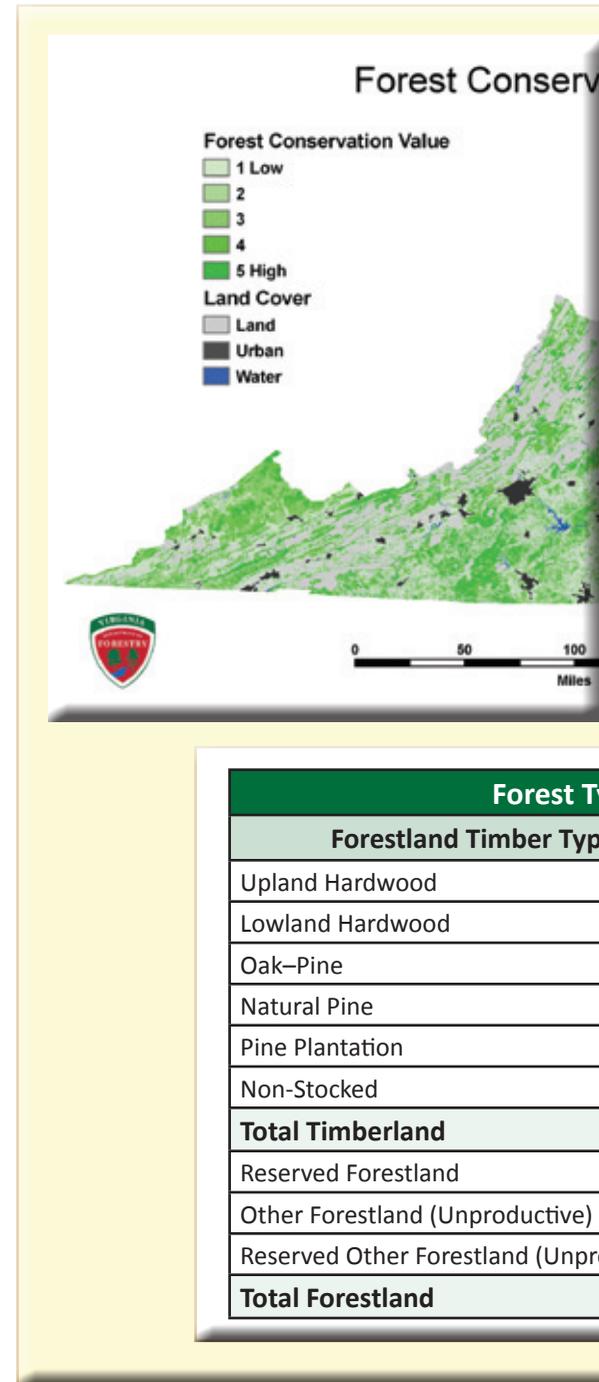
One of the assessment's key sections is Virginia's Forest Trends and Conditions. Three important changes for the foreseeable future were identified. They are:

1. population growth and the associated demographic changes, such as an aging population and increased ethnic diversity;
2. the continued loss of forestland throughout the Commonwealth, and
3. changes in forest ownership, particularly from one generation to the next.

Threats to Virginia's Forests

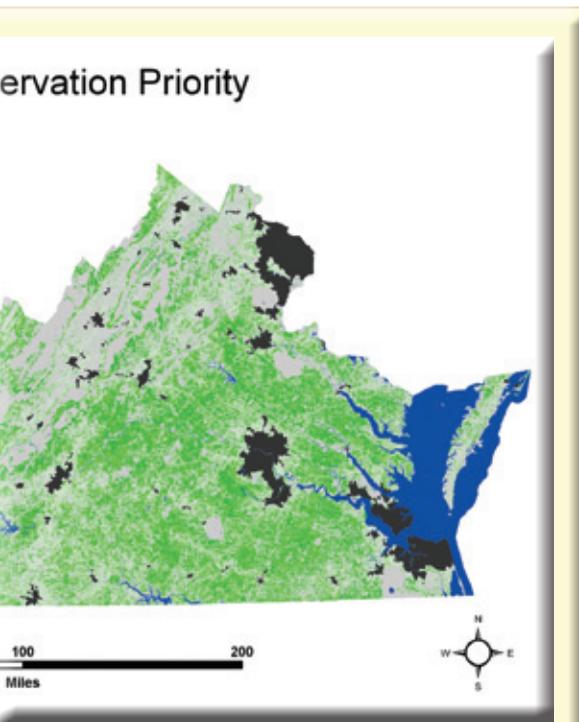
In addition to the three changes, eight current and potential threats were identified. These threats are:

1. the expansion of the wildland-urban interface and the associated dangers of wildland fire;



2. the sustainability of the forest, especially in the area of new markets and products;

Plans for the Future of Virginia's Forests



Forest Types	
Types	Acres
	10,072,400
	549,800
	1,532,800
	1,374,100
	1,666,000
	113,700
	15,308,800
	410,200
(ive)	41,600
(Unproductive)	5,100
	15,765,700

- the loss of a viable forest industry;
- the decline of certain species of trees;
- a diminishing focus on tree improvement efforts, and
- insufficient funding for natural resource programs and conservation education.

Issues Impacting Virginia's Forests

The assessment also identified five multi-state and 10 Virginia-specific issues that demand our attention. Issues affecting both Virginia and our neighboring states are:

- the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay – an American treasure that is impacted by six states and the District of Columbia;
- forest health, which includes threats posed by Southern Pine Beetle and Emerald Ash Borer among others;
- the restoration of diminished species, such as longleaf pine, shortleaf pine and American chestnut;
- the conservation of land in the New River Valley, and
- the restoration of the Appalachian forest.

The **Virginia-specific issues** are divided among the three national themes. Under **“conserve working forestlands,”** the key issues are:

- to conserve the forestland base;
- to promote a larger, connected forest landscape, and
- to ensure the sustainable use of woody biomass.

The key issues in **“protect forests from harm”** are:

- to protect woodland home communities from fire;
- to protect forests from invasive species, and
- to conserve and restore diminished species.

Under the third national theme, **“enhance public benefits from trees and forests,”** Virginia’s key issues were:

- to enhance the role of forests in maintaining water quality and quantity;
- to promote initiatives associated with ecosystem services;
- to expand and improve our urban and community forests, and
- to facilitate opportunities for landowners to earn forest certification.

- any potential impacts associated with climate change;
- a decline in reforestation of our lands;

The Goal

Healthy, Sustainable

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Our Strategic Plan

With all the issues, conditions and threats now identified, the Virginia Department of Forestry was able to develop a number of strategic goals that will help mitigate the projected losses and bolster the areas of opportunity delineated in the assessment. The strategic goals are:

- ▲ Protect the citizens, their property and the forest resource from wildfire
- ▲ Protect, promote and enhance forested watersheds, non-tidal wetlands and riparian areas
- ▲ Improve the stewardship, health and diversity of forest resources
- ▲ Conserve the forestland base
- ▲ Promote forest industry and diversified markets, including ecosystem services markets, for forest landowners
- ▲ Collect, maintain and disseminate forest resource inventory information and applied research
- ▲ Manage agency resources to effectively and efficiently accomplish these strategic initiatives
- ▲ Strengthen the culture of preparedness across state agencies, their employees and customers

To learn more or to read the entire state assessment and/or strategic plan, please visit our website, www.dof.virginia.gov. Whether you are a natural resources professional or not, each of us has a lot at stake when it comes to the health and vitality of our forests. With the support of all citizens of the Commonwealth, Virginia's forest resources will continue to contribute to the excellent quality of life we have come to expect and enjoy everyday.



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VDOF P00147; 08/2010

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