



SYSTEM DIMENSIONS

Extent
Pattern

CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL

Nutrients, Carbon, Oxygen
Contaminants
Physical

BIOLOGICAL COMPONENTS

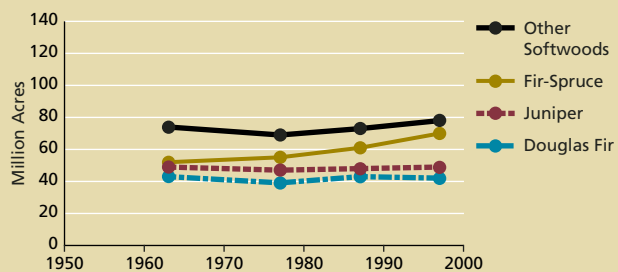
Plants and Animals
Communities
Ecological Productivity

HUMAN USES

Food, Fiber, and Water
Recreation and Other Services

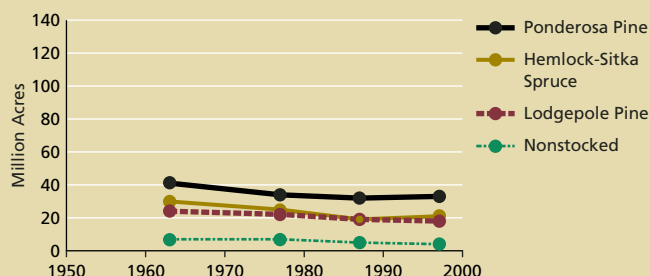
● Forest Types

Western Forest Cover Types Increasing in Area



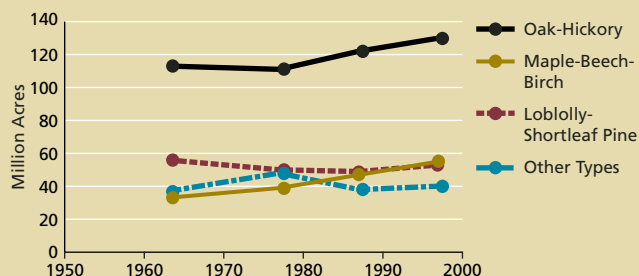
Data Source: USDA Forest Service. Coverage: all 50 states.

Western Forest Cover Types Decreasing in Area



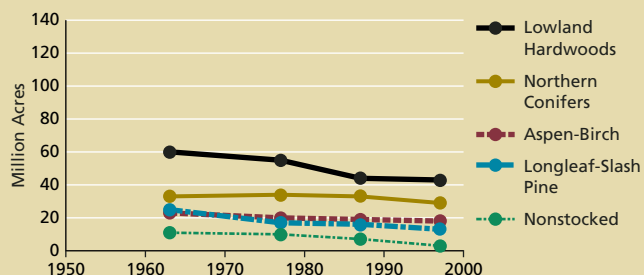
Data Source: USDA Forest Service. Coverage: all 50 states.

Eastern Forest Cover Types Increasing in Area



Data Source: USDA Forest Service. Coverage: all 50 states.

Eastern Forest Cover Types Decreasing in Area



Data Source: USDA Forest Service. Coverage: all 50 states.

What Is This Indicator, and Why Is It Important?

This indicator reports the acreage of a variety of forest “cover types.” Cover types describe the dominant species of trees found in the forests (e.g., oak-hickory forests are dominated by oaks and hickories, but include other kinds of trees as well).

Forest type may change as a result of direct human intervention (fire suppression, planting and harvesting, development, and grazing) or because of natural succession. Changes in climate may also affect the range of different forest types.

Different plants and animals live in different types of forests. In addition, the types of forest available influence the way people use them for recreation and other purposes.

What Do the Data Show? From 1963 to 1997, oak-hickory and maple-beech-birch in the East and fir-spruce in the West increased the most (by 18 million, 22 million, and 18 million acres, respectively).

In the East, longleaf-slash pine and lowland hardwoods (elm-ash-cottonwood and oak-gum-cypress) had the largest decreases in acreage (12 million and 17 million acres, respectively). In the West, hemlock-sitka spruce, ponderosa pine, and lodgepole pine decreased the most (by 9 million, 8 million, and 6 million acres, respectively).

In both regions, “nonstocked” land (land where trees have been cut but that has not yet regrown as forest) has declined steadily.

It is important to note that total forest area changed very little over this period. In general, the increases or reductions described here represent shifts from one forest type to another.

The technical note for this indicator is on page 240.