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Annual Timber Harvest in Oregon

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Oregon statewide timber harvest – All ownerships – Billion Board Feet / Year – Average annual harvest volume during each decade indicated. {Source: Oregon Dept. of Forestry}

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2011
Private Forests	6.01	4.17	3.71	3.28	3.25	3.13	2.73
Federal Forests	2.23	4.35	4.31	3.87	1.15	.32	.54
State/Tribal/County Forests	.47	.27	.34	.37	.31	.38	.38
Total OR Harvest	8.71	8.79	8.36	7.52	4.71	3.83	3.65

Timber Harvest History in Oregon

The table above indicates the average annual timber harvest volume during each decade indicated (measured in billion board feet / year). Although a commonly abused myth is that Oregon timber harvest peaked during the 1980s, the data shows clearly that statewide harvest actually crested during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s.

The fall-off in statewide annual timber harvest is not because Oregon is running out of trees—in fact just the opposite is the case. Oregon's calculated sustainable forest growth of available forestlands is between 6 to 8 billion board feet / year. Private forestland owners continue to harvest less than their annual growth, and so do the public forestlands. The fall-off in statewide annual timber harvest is largely explained by the decline in harvest from federal forestlands since 1989. Considering how annual harvest from all ownerships has been well-below the sustainable forest growth for the past two decades, opportunities are certainly bright for increased timber harvest and forest products production in Oregon's future!

From the end of World War II until 1989, timber harvests in Oregon generally ranged from 7 billion to 9 billion board feet annually—a long-term sustainable volume. Since 1989, timber harvests on federal lands have dropped perilously by more than 90 percent, due to environmental litigation and conflicting federal forest laws, policies and plans. Meanwhile, harvests from private lands have remained relatively stable, subject to movements in proportion to the US economy. Today, more than 75 percent of Oregon's timber harvest consistently comes from private forestlands.

Oregon's timber harvest hit bottom in 2009 during the depths of the US Recession (2.75 billion bdf/year), following the collapse of the housing market. However, harvest has been slowly rebounding, reaching 3.65 billion board feet in 2011. The 2009 statewide harvest was the smallest annual harvest from Oregon forests since the 1930s Great Depression. For Oregon's forest sector, 2009 was the perfect storm of three forest product market impacts: 1) failed federal forestland management policies; 2) the deepest post-WWII dip in US housing construction; and 3) the severe US Great Recession.

Oregon's forest sector is gradually rebounding, and the future looks favorable for increased forest improvements, harvest, mill production, and technology innovation—keeping Oregon the nation-leading structural wood producer and forestry manager in America.

Oregon's Timber Harvest by Ownership

The federal government manages the majority (60%) of the forestland in Oregon. **However, more than three-quarters of the timber harvest comes from private land. Private forests in Oregon are classified as either large or small forests—with the small ownerships typically family-owned and under 5,000-acres in size (average size is 40-60 acres).**

The average annual timber harvest during the decade of the 2000s (2000-09), illustrates the relative share of recent timber harvest pattern from Oregon's forestlands.

- [Federal Owns 60% - Harvests 8% of Timber.](#) The federal government owns 60% of Oregon's forests, but the average annual federal harvest was just 8% of total volume during the 2000s.
- [Private Owners of 34% - Harvest 82% of Timber.](#) Private forestlands are 34% of Oregon's forests, and the average annual private harvest was 82% of total volume during the 2000s.
- [State & Other Publics Own 6% - Harvest 10% of Timber.](#) State and other publics own 6% of Oregon's forests, but the annual harvest was just 10% of total volume during the 2000s.

Oregon Forestland Size

The State of Oregon spans 63 million acres, about half of which is forestland. The federal government manages about 60% of Oregon's forestland. Forestland is land that is capable of having at least 10 percent cover of trees. Roughly 80 percent of total forestland is classified as timberland, which can grow commercial-grade timber and excludes forestland with low growth rates and areas where logging is restricted – such as Wilderness areas.

Oregon Total Land Area (acres)	63,018,000
Forestland	30,472,000
Timberland	24,735,000

Other land (urban, cropland, etc.)		32,546,000
<u>Government Forestland</u>		
US Forest Service national forest		12,133,000
US Forest Service (Wilderness)		2,139,000
US Forest Service grassland		11,000
National Park Service		159,000
Bureau of Land Management		3,760,000
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service		16,000
Other federal		<u>27,000</u>
Total Federal	60%	18,245,000
State forests		848,000
Other state		159,000
County and municipal lands		156,000
Tribal Forests		<u>463,000</u>
Total State & Other Public	5%	1,626,000
Total Government	65%	19,408,000
<u>Private Forestland</u>		
Large private landowners		5,933,000
Small private landowners (<5K acre)		<u>4,668,000</u>
Total Private	35%	10,601,000
Total Oregon Forestland	100%	30,473,000

Private Forests -- Oregon Forest Practices Act

The Forest Practices Act has been a national model for environmental protection during private forestland timber harvest and other operations, since enacted by the Oregon Legislature in 1971. The state is a leader in regulating forest operations to protect a wide range of resources, including fish, wildlife and water quality. This progressive act is administered by the Oregon Department of Forestry, and applies to 10.6 million acres of non-federal forestland.

Administration by The Oregon Department of Forestry assures that diverse resources are protected during harvest, and trees are planted to provide sustainable future forests. Protections in the law have been upgraded and strengthened over the years, as new knowledge became available. Oregon protects its forest resources through the law's assurances, including:

- Provide comprehensive riparian area protection -- New 'Stream Rules' added in 1995
- Assure water quality, fish habitat and wetlands guarded
- Protect wildlife habitat and diversity -- retain sensitive sites, snags and down-wood
- Promote landscape structure and aesthetics -- limited regeneration harvest unit size
- Reforest within two years after harvest -- plant mix of native tree species
- Maintain forest productivity -- minimize soil disturbance and promote growth
- Minimize resource impact of roads -- apply strict construction and maintenance standards
- Notification required before harvesting -- State Stewardship Foresters assure compliance

Small Private Forests... A Very Special Forest Ownership

65,000 Oregonians. That's the number of individuals who own between 10 and 5,000 acres of forestland. Classified as "Family Forestlands," these forestlands have often been handed-down from family-to-family through generations. These small private forestlands are typically owned and managed by families and individuals who make their livelihoods in other occupations, yet have a passion for their own special forest.

The amount of timber coming from family forestlands varies greatly from year to year, depending on demand in the market. Family forestlands accounted for about 9 percent (.344 billion board feet/year) of Oregon's average annual timber harvest in the decade of the 2000s. These small forestlands are estimated to annually grow more than twice that annual harvest volume. Yet not all family forestlands are managed for timber production. Family forestland owners also manage forests for recreational use, fish and wildlife habitats, or just pure aesthetics.

Most of these landowners are not professional foresters; they are teachers, farmers/ranchers, accountants, salesmen, truck drivers, doctors, factory workers, and clergymen—who make their livelihoods in other occupations. They're also quite possibly your neighbors. That's because a lot of family forestland is owned by folks who live in the city, and many of those small forests are located close to residential areas, in the foothills just outside of Oregon's metropolitan areas.

Family forests at risk. A recent survey of family forestland owners indicated that they, like most Oregonians, desire to keep their property as forestland. But, caring for the forest costs money. In many cases, family forest landowners use their land to earn a portion of their living. If the cost of regulation and management gets too expensive, the small forest owner would turn to other investment or land use alternatives. And, unfortunately if income in small forestland ownership is insufficient, the owners would consider selling-off the family forest for subdivisions, strip malls, agricultural clearing, vineyards, or other development.

Oregon small forest policy in the future. The small forestland owner must have the opportunity to make a reasonable income for their small forestland ownership. Keeping family-owned forests economically viable is critical to Oregon forest sustainability—because the small private forestlands provide a rich diversity and abundance to the total Oregon forest landscape. Effective forest policies for small forestlands will result from increased public awareness of the important role that family forestlands play in the forest ecosystem, and encouraging responsible public policy that encourages the professional growing and harvesting of trees on small private forest ownerships. That's the best way to assure that Oregon keeps family forestlands in a forested condition.

Federal Forests – The Gridlock and Debates Continue

Across the Northwest the debate continues over how best to manage the region's federal forests, and whether timber should be harvested from public forests. Federal forests come in two different colors: 1) national forests managed by the US Forest Service; and 2) BLM forests managed by the US Bureau of Land Management.

Since 1989, federal management and harvest has steadily declined, as prohibitions have halted timber sales. A combination of factors, including contradictory laws, outdated regulations, obstructive litigation, conflicting court rulings, ineffective administrative rules, and political interference have stalled federal forest management. This gridlock situation jeopardizes the health of the federal forest environment, as well as the health of rural economies, the health of nearby communities, and non-federal forest and rangeland property owners.

In April 1994, the Clinton Administration adopted the so-called 'Northwest Forest Plan' -- a forest plan promised to resolve the federal forest debate in western Oregon federal forests. Additionally, during the 1990s, the Clinton Administration adopted prohibitions that hobbled forestry in eastern Oregon federal forests. In the last two decades, these misguided plans have sadly failed to live up to their meager promises; nor have they resolved the legal gridlock or balanced the needs of the environment, communities and society.

- Congress is now looking into updating the federal forest environmental safeguards to better protect the economy, as well as ecosystems.
- Oregon's future does not require a trade-off between forest products and environmental protection. To favor either at the expense of the other is to imperil statewide economic and environmental diversity. Oregon can have both.
- The promise of Oregon's most productive forests in the world depends on greater public understanding and support of how managed federal forests contribute to our economy.

Forest Guarantee - Timber Today & Tomorrow

Oregon's forests are among the most productive in the world. Because they are constantly replanted and renewed by forest professionals, they will be that way forever. After nearly a century of harvest, long-term forest renewal and responsible forest practices explain why Oregon continues to have such abundant and diverse forests. Forest managers and scientists have learned how to manage these working forests to provide the timber we need - in harmony with the wildlife habitat, clean water, and recreation we want. Given what we know about the resilience of our forests, innovations in harvest technology, and advances in forest science, the following advantages of Oregon forestry are sustainable into the future:

- America's annual forest growth exceeds harvest by over 30% each year. Since 1952, timber growth has increased steadily across all ownerships and regions - the greatest increase in the Northwest. Standing timber volume is 30% greater than in 1952. More trees are growing in America's forests than at any time since the early 1900's.
- An examination of Oregon public forests in 1995 reveals that annual growth (585 million cubic feet) exceeded public harvest (131 million cubic feet) by 347%. Private forest growth (720 million cubic feet) exceeded private harvest (640 million cubic feet) by 13%.
- Oregon forests are thriving, as an important part of the state's beauty and quality environment. Oregonians have done a lot of things right in protecting forests through modern forest management. Credit for such diverse forests is owed to Oregon's many forest professionals.