



# USDA Forest Service Fact Sheet

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**The 2010 Resources Planning Act (RPA) Assessment:** The Forest and Rangelands Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) of 1974 requires the Forest Service to prepare an assessment of renewable natural resources on the nation's forests and rangelands every 10 years. The RPA Assessment provides a snapshot of current U.S. forest and rangeland conditions and trends on all ownerships, identifies drivers of change, and projects conditions 50 years into the future. The latest RPA Assessment's projections are influenced by a set of scenarios with varying assumptions about U.S. population and economic growth, global population and economic growth, global wood energy consumption, U.S. land use change, and global climate change from 2010 to 2060. The report summarizes Assessment findings about the status, trends, and projected future of forests, rangelands, wildlife and fish, biodiversity, water, outdoor recreation, wilderness, and urban forests, and the effects of climate change on these resources.

## Key Findings of the 2010 RPA Assessment:

- Urbanization and low density development will continue to threaten the integrity of natural ecosystems.
  - Forest area will decline in all scenarios, contributing to reduced growth in total forest inventory, reduced forest carbon stocks, and reduced tree canopy cover.
  - Total forest inventory will peak between 2020 and 2040, and then decline through 2060, with the largest declines in hardwood inventories.
  - Carbon stored in forests is projected to peak between 2020 and 2040 and then decline through 2060.
  - Urban forests will be increasingly important to deliver crucial ecosystem services.
  - Biodiversity in the United States will continue to erode as land use changes and climate change put new stresses on terrestrial and aquatic habitats across the country.
- Climate change will alter natural ecosystems and affect their ability to provide goods and services.
  - Climate change will increase future water demands and decrease water yields.
  - The vulnerability of the U.S. water supply tends to increase over time as the U.S. population expands and climate effects become larger.
  - Future climate change effects will be more pronounced on western U.S. forests.
  - Terrestrial habitats in the grassland-forestland transitions throughout the central United States and the steep elevation gradients in the Intermountain West will be most stressed by a shifting climate regime.
- Competition for goods and services from natural ecosystems will increase.
  - Timber supplies are increasing and U.S. timber prices are projected to be relatively flat unless significant increases in domestic and global wood energy demand occur.
  - Population growth and demographic shifts will result in more people competing for recreational opportunities on a fixed or shrinking land base, but will also change the patterns of recreation use.
  - Increasing water demands are likely to increase competition between water users.
  - Development effects on water quality, in combination with increasing water demands, raises concerns about the health and relative abundance of aquatic species in the future.
  - Rangeland productivity is stable, and rangeland forage supply is sufficient to meet demand.
- Geographic variation in resource responses to drivers of change will require regional and local strategies to address resource management issues.
  - Forest area losses will be greatest in the South.
  - The West will continue to have more areas with vulnerability to water shortage.
  - Imperiled aquatic species are concentrated in the eastern and southwestern states.
  - Recreation opportunities will be reduced more sharply in the East because of the distribution of Federal lands.

## Contact:

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