

PENNSYLVANIA'S VAST FOREST RESOURCE

Pennsylvania has the most valuable hardwood resource in the United States. Hardwood forests cover 17 million acres, nearly 60 percent of the state, and are the predominant type of land cover (farmland and with developed land each account for about 20 percent of land cover).

Forests are Pennsylvania's only renewable natural resource -- encompassing the nation's most commercially valuable species, including oak, cherry, maple, ash, hickory and poplar. More than just an economic resource, Penn's woods also provide myriad recreational opportunities, habitat for wildlife, and protection of air and water quality.



Pennsylvania's forests have been managed for commercial timber production since the Civil War. Today, Pennsylvanians continue to rely on the forest for many uses, including wood products, jobs, tax revenue, recreation and environmental protection.

Continued management of our forests will ensure that all Pennsylvanians benefit from the state's namesake resource. Many Pennsylvanians are concerned about the impacts of growth and development on their communities. Management of forests for sustainable timber production helps ensure that land remains open and forested. Although some people may not find all timber harvests to be aesthetically pleasing, commercial forestry helps protect forestland for future generations in the same way that farming protects farmland for the future.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognizes the importance of maintaining farm and forestland to preserve open space. The Governor's Center for Local Government Services, in its first land use inventory report, identified commercial forestry as a preferred land use.

In order to encourage the maintenance and management of forested open space and promote forestry as a sound use of land, forestry and timber harvesting are a permitted use by right in all local zoning districts subject to the state Municipalities Planning Code.

More than 70 species of trees are found in the state. There are two major forest-type groups:

- Oak/hickory (hardwoods that cover 46 percent of the state, mainly central and south), and
- Northern hardwoods (cover 41 percent of state, mainly north and northwest) including birch, sugar maple and black cherry.

According to the most recent U.S. Forest Service inventory, Pennsylvania ranks first in the nation for hardwood growing stock. Sawtimber stands (commercially-favored trees that produce sawlogs) account for more than half of the state's timberland, and more than half the sawtimber inventory is in trees that are 15 inches in diameter or larger.