



## Forest Facts

# FORESTRY IN VIRGINIA

## WHAT IS FORESTRY?

Forestry is the science of growing and managing forests, which are lands covered by trees. Forests can grow by themselves, but by managing them, we can provide the most benefits to people, wildlife and the rest of the environment. Good forestry is sustainable. This means that managed forests continue to grow and produce the things people need from trees, while keeping a healthy environment.



## HOW DOES FORESTRY HELP VIRGINIA?

Each year, Virginia's forests provide billions of dollars to our state's economy. This money comes into our state through the forest products industry, other forest landowners and from money people spend for recreation in forests.

In addition to actual money earned, Virginia's forests provide "ecosystem services." These are benefits that forests provide simply by growing! Ecosystem services include protecting water quality; improving air quality; helping to keep the climate stable; providing habitat for plants and animals, and offering beautiful scenery. It is hard to estimate how much these services are worth, because we don't usually pay for them directly, but their estimated value is well over a billion dollars each year.





### WHAT ARE “WORKING FORESTS” AND WHY DO WE NEED THEM?

Forests are full of trees, which are good for people, animals and the entire environment.

A working forest is one that is actively managed and usually gives its owner income at some time. Working forests not only supply products like paper and lumber, but also clean our air and water, protect the soil, produce oxygen, provide shade, create wildlife habitat, offer beautiful scenery and give us space for recreation.

### WHAT DOES A FORESTER DO?

A forester's job is to work with trees. Most foresters have jobs that allow them to spend some time outdoors and some time indoors. Tasks may include meeting with landowners to help them make decisions about caring for their forest; writing management plans; making maps; coordinating tree planting; fighting forest fires; visiting areas where trees are being cut to make sure good practices are being used; checking for diseases and insects that can harm trees; answering questions from the public, and making presentations to groups. Foresters who work for the government may do all of these things, and more, over the course of several weeks! Foresters who work in private business may specialize in particular forestry tasks.





## WHY DO WE CUT DOWN TREES?

Trees may be cut down, or harvested, for many reasons. These include keeping a forest healthy, improving wildlife habitat, making products and providing income.

Cutting some of the trees in a forest gives the others more nutrients, sunlight, water and space to grow. Sometimes all of the trees are cut at once, to start a new forest of trees that cannot grow in shade, such as pines. Trees that have diseases or harmful insects may be cut to keep other trees from getting sick.

Harvesting trees can make the habitat better for some animals, such as deer, turkeys, rabbits, foxes and many songbirds and insects. When trees are taken away, more sunlight reaches the ground. This promotes the growth of grasses, soft plants and shrubs that produce wildlife food and shelter.

Trees are also harvested to make products we use every day. These include lumber for building; paper for reading and writing, and more than 5,000 other products. You can find tree products in odd places: toothpaste, ice cream, chewing gum, molded plastics, packaging and soap, to name a few! Selling trees for forest products can help people earn a living. Because trees have monetary value, people look at them as an investment for the future. This may encourage them to plant more trees, so there will always be a new supply growing.





### WILL WE RUN OUT OF TREES?

In Virginia, many more trees are grown than are cut, so we won't run out of trees anytime soon. Trees are a renewable resource, meaning that we can replace the ones we use. In the cycle of forestry, when trees are cut, new ones are planted or allowed to come back naturally. Even a clear-cut area is soon covered by young trees.

Unfortunately, we are losing forestland in Virginia as more people move into our state. This land loss is happening in many parts of the country, not just in Virginia. Forests are often cleared away to make room for new houses or shopping centers. This kind of land clearing is not the same as forestry, because a new forest does not come back afterward.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP SAVE OUR FORESTS?

If your family or friends own forested land, encourage them to keep it and manage it. A well-managed forest can benefit the owners as well as the environment and the community.

It may sound strange, but you can help forests by buying wood products from Virginia and elsewhere in the United States. When people buy wood products, forest owners can make money from their trees. This makes it more likely that they will keep growing trees on their land, rather than changing it to other land uses. Wood is a renewable resource for building. It requires much less energy to process than nonrenewable materials like steel and concrete. Wood products that last for many years, such as lumber and furniture, continue to store carbon, a "greenhouse gas," keeping it out of the atmosphere.

You can also help save forests by teaching others what you have learned about forestry. And whenever you can, plant more trees!



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