

Policy, Uses, and Values

H. Ken Cordell¹

The South has changed dramatically in the last 100 years. It was a rural, agrarian society; it has now become a predominantly urban one. This has changed forever the region's forests and their management, use, and protection. In 1900, there were just over 20 million people living in the South. By 2000, the South's population was almost 89 million, making the region now one of the fastest growing in the country. Projections by the U.S. Census Bureau indicate the region's population will continue to grow at a rate greater than the national growth rate, reaching over 110 million by 2020. By the year 2000, 74 percent of the region's population was urban, and as much as 80 percent of the region's population will be urban by 2020 (Tarrant and others 2002). The population of the South is now mostly concentrated along the coast, in the Piedmont cities, e.g., Atlanta, GA, Charlotte, NC, and Columbia, SC; in the major cities of Texas, e.g., Austin, Dallas, and Houston; and in Florida. In 1990, the South's rural population was concentrated in the Southern Appalachians, parts of the Mississippi River Basin, and the western Texas and Oklahoma Panhandle. But, overall, the entire region experienced a general decrease in rural residency between 1980 and 1990, a trend that continues today.

The future of the South's forests will be determined within the context of rapid population growth and increasing urbanization. The Southern Forest Resource Assessment forecasts that 12 million more acres of the region's remaining forest land will be lost to urbanization by 2020 (Wear and Greis 2002). These trends make the management of the remaining forests, and those we will have in the future, extremely important.

Because we must deal with the growing human pressures on forests, we must understand the human dimension of forestry. In these chapters of the book, we review research on forest values, forest uses, and forest policy in the South over the last several decades.

The chapter "Forest Values and Attitudes in the South; Past and Future Research" by Michael A. Tarrant and R. Bruce Hull, examines public viewpoints on forests over the past 100 years. At the turn of the 20th century, most people viewed forests as a resource for economic growth—a means of livelihood. Forest utilization was preeminent and concerns about protection were just emerging. Today many southerners put environmental protection and nonuse values over economic values. This change in attitudes is significant for forest policy and forest management. Increasingly, public opinion and the threat of challenges, such as in the courts, have reoriented forest policy and management, especially policy and management that relate to public forests. Tarrant and Hull offer a vision of forest science and management shaped to reflect the changing values and attitudes of southerners. They discuss (1) increasing pluralism and conflict, (2) the need for more collaboration and citizen science, (3) creation of politically viable indicators of environmental quality, and (4) moving beyond a preservation-intervention polarization.

In the chapter "Nonindustrial Forest Landowner Research: A Synthesis and New Directions" by Gregory S. Amacher, M. Christine Conway, and J. Sullivan, an econometric examination of nonindustrial forest landowners is provided. Nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) landowners own more than two-thirds of the forest land in some Southern States. Because of the importance of NIPF lands as a source of wood supply, the behavior of these landowners has been a frequent topic in forest economics, rural sociology, and policy research. In this chapter, the authors review the large amount of research literature on the topic, and then propose new directions for future research. An emphasis has been on recent empirical work regarding the economics of nonindustrial forest landowner behavior. The majority of research undertaken prior to the late 1980s involved identifying and understanding factors that influence reforestation

¹ Senior Scientist and Project Leader, U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Southern Research Station, Athens, GA 30602.

or harvesting decisions. More recently researchers have studied a broader set of issues, including the relationships between nontimber ownership objectives and uses and other ownership factors, such as bequests and owner characterization. Another recent emphasis has been spatial mapping of owner decisionmaking and intentions. The authors conclude with recommendations for future research. They recommend that reservation prices for various activities be studied as a way of assessing likelihood of market entry, that the influence of adjacent owners be studied, that substitution between various types of land use decisions be investigated, and that individual ownership data be integrated further into spatial landscape models and Geographic Information System applications.

The chapter “Recreation and Nontimber Forest Products” by H. Ken Cordell and James L. Chamberlain reviews research conducted in the South during the last five decades on forest recreation and the gathering of nontimber forest products (NTFP) for personal as well as commercial uses. Research on forest recreation has been voluminous; research on NTFPs much less so. Forest recreation research had its beginnings in the late 1950s within a few southern universities and with two Federal Agencies—the Forest Service and the Economic Research Service. Much of the recreation research in these early years emphasized identifying who recreates, where they recreate, their impacts on the resource, and whether recreation and tourism can be used to address persistent poverty in some areas of the South. Through the 1960s and 1970s, recreation research expanded tremendously with greater participation among universities and public agencies. Both practical problems and advances in theory and methods of research were addressed. Through the 1980s and 1990s, many topics of management concern and of science concern were studied as the need for science-based information for recreation management expanded.

Unlike recreation research, research on NTFPs is relatively new in the South. NTFPs are forest plant materials that may include fungi, moss, lichens, herbs, vines, shrubs, trees, or parts thereof. Only a modest amount of research dealing with NTFPs has been undertaken over the last 50 years. Most of it has focused on describing the varied uses of the forest plants, their site requirements, and other botanical factors. Until

very recently, within the last decade, NTFPs were not well recognized as a management concern, nor as a recreational or commercial pursuit. Much of the early research focused on defining and understanding how people used these products. Currently more university and agency scientists are looking at various aspects of nontimber forest products, from management, recreational use, commercial use, and ecological impact perspectives. The chapter ends with the authors’ observations about future research that needs to be carried out for improved management of forests.

Another chapter “Timber Market Research, Private Forests, and Policy Rhetoric” by David N. Wear and Jeffrey Prestemon interprets the workings or failings of timber markets as core issues for the conservation movement in the United States. The South is the only major timber-producing region of the United States where private forests dominate and where free interaction between private buyers and sellers determines timber prices and harvests. Private owners currently control 89 percent of timberland in the region; 20 percent is held by the forest industry and 69 percent is held by nonindustrial entities. Because the South is the clearest example of private forest management, it has provided a setting for evaluating core assumptions regarding markets, market failure, and conservation rhetoric. In this chapter, the authors examine the history of research into private timber management and the function of private timber markets in the South. In particular, they examine research into the behavior of private owners and of private timber supply. They also examine how this private forest land research has been influenced by policy rhetoric about forests in the United States.

The authors contend that the rhetoric of timber famine led to the establishment of forestry programs in the Federal Government and to designation of national forests. Regulation of forestry activities at the State level also was a result in parts of the United States. The profession and practice of forestry can also be linked to urgent concerns regarding timber shortages in the 19th century. Timber shortages can be viewed as market failures caused by overharvesting or a lack of information regarding overall timber inventories. Overharvesting can be the result of uncertainty about future timber demand and prices, which gives landowners a strong incentive to harvest early. Without information on overall

inventories, landowners cannot anticipate oncoming shortages and so fail to recognize the potential for additional returns from delaying their harvests. Both cases would lead to suboptimal harvesting over time. A related concern regarding timber markets has been a perceived failure of landowners to protect or invest enough in the productive capacity of their forests. But issues concerning the effectiveness of private timber management and markets in providing a sustainable timber supply have largely been answered. The research emphasis now is shifting to understanding how these markets work so that the future extent and structure of the forests of the South can better be predicted. Better knowledge of how markets work will enhance understanding of how human occupation and utilization of forest lands will influence ecosystem structure and function in the future.

LITERATURE CITED

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