

Climate Change, Forests, and Water

Americans rely on their forests and grasslands for a wide range of benefits. Chief among these is clean water. Over 180 million people depend on forested watersheds for their drinking water. Watershed protection was one of the primary reasons for the founding of the Forest Service more than a century ago, a time when America had lost about 200 million acres of forest due to land clearing for agriculture and timber. Because of the loss of forested watersheds, the water in many U.S. streams and rivers was too polluted to drink. Today the 155 national forests and grasslands cover over 193 million acres in 43 states and Puerto Rico, with a core purpose of assuring plentiful supplies of clean water to the American people.

In an era of climate change, forests will play an increasingly vital role in protecting the Nation's watersheds.

