



A PREVIEW OF "FLORIDA'S TIMBER, 1970"

Abstract. --The fourth survey of Florida's timber resource shows that area of commercial forest land totals 16.2 million acres, or 46 percent of the total land. **Erosion** of the forest base has continued with an actual decrease of 940,400 acres, or almost 5 percent, since 1959. Most of this decrease was the result of land clearing for agricultural use and urban development. An additional 2,673,500 acres in South and Central Florida formerly classified as commercial forest were reclassified either to natural rangeland or unproductive forest. Over this same 11-year period, volume of growing-stock timber increased 20 percent, from 9.1 to 10.9 billion cubic feet. In 1969, net growth of growing stock exceeded removals by 184 million cubic feet, or 53 percent.

The fourth Statewide survey of Florida's timber resource was completed in June 1970, and a statistical report has been issued on each of the four Forest Survey Units within the State: Northwest, Northeast, Central, and South. Work is underway on a comprehensive analysis of the findings and is scheduled for publication in early 1971. In the meantime, this interim report establishes some of the key State totals.

The new findings show that area of commercial forest land totals 16.2 million acres, or 46 percent of the total land. This means that the erosion of the forest base has continued in Florida. Area of commercial forest land has actually decreased by 940,400 acres, or almost 5 percent, since the 1959 survey. An additional 2,673,500 acres in South and Central Florida formerly classified as commercial forest were reclassified either to natural rangeland or unproductive forest in this latest survey. It has been widely recognized for years that the inclusion of these marginal lands in the forest base tended to distort the forestry picture in Florida. Practically no timber or evidence of reproduction occurs on the areas reclassified as rangeland and very little timber is involved on the areas reclassified as unproductive.

Forest industry now owns 5.2 million acres, or 32 percent of the commercial forest, and has an additional 457,600 acres under long-term lease. Another 2.1 million acres, or 13 percent of the commercial forest, are publicly owned. The remaining 8.9 million acres, or 55 percent, are owned by farmers and other miscellaneous private individuals and corporations. Pine and oak-pine forest types occupy almost 61 percent of total area of commercial forest land (table 1).

Table I.--Area of commercial forest land, by ownership class, by forest type, and by stand size, 1970

Ownership class	All types	Forest type				All stands	Stand size			
		Pine	Oak-pine	Upland hardwood	Bottomland hardwood		Sawtimber	Poletimber	Sapling and seedling	Nonstocked areas
- - - - - Thousand acres - - - - -										
National Forest	1,035.3	775.8	93.6	15.5	150.4	1,035.3	419.4	305.4	244.0	66.5
Other public	1,110.2	516.6	209.7	221.1	162.8	1,110.2	406.1	203.0	243.5	257.6
Forest industry	1,216.5	3,062.8	517.8	329.3	1,306.6	5,216.5	1,538.0	1,312.0	1,944.3	422.2
Farmer	2,915.1	1,176.0	373.7	567.7	798.4	2,915.8	929.1	809.6	679.6	497.5
Miscellaneous private	5,953.8	2,675.0	474.3	1,167.6	1,636.9	5,953.8	1,695.2	1,520.9	1,417.8	1,319.9
All ownerships	16,231.6	8,206.2	1,669.1	2,301.2	4,055.1	16,231.6	4,987.8	4,150.9	4,529.2	2,563.7

1/ Does not include an estimated 457,600 acres of farmer-owned and miscellaneous private lands leased to forest industry.

Table 2.--Volume of growing stock and sawtimber on commercial forest land, by ownership class and species group, 1970

Ownership class	Growing stock					Sawtimber				
	All species	Pine	Other softwood	soft hardwood	Hard hardwood	All species	Pine	Other softwood	Soft hardwood	Hard hardwood
- - - - - Million cubic feet - - - - - - - - - - Million board feet ^{1/} - - - - -										
National Forest	925.9	369.5	91.5	142.1	29.1	2,579.6	1,881.5	273.1	336.9	88.1
Other public	638.5	1,636.2	110.6	93.6	34.8	2,006.2	1,322.9	371.5	215.9	95.9
Forest industry	3,522.3		583.5	843.4	459.2	9,729.7	4,495.7	1,784.6	2,066.7	1,382.7
Farmer	1,962.6	785.6	369.8		343.9	5,417.8	2,304.5	1,013.1	1,079.6	1,020.6
Miscellaneous private	3,839.1	1,500.7	763.6	463.3	665.4	10,731.2	4,279.1	2,240.1	2,266.9	1,945.1
All ownerships	10,888.4	4,985.2	1,919.0	2,451.8	1,532.4	30,464.5	14,283.7	5,682.4	5,966.0	4,532.4

1/ International 1/4-inch rule.

Table 3. --Net annual growth of growing stock and sawtimber on commercial forest land, by ownership class and species group, 1969

Ownership class	Growing stock					Sawtimber				
	All species	Pine	Other softwood	Soft hardwood	Hard hardwood	All species	Pine	Other softwood	Soft hardwood	Hard hardwood
	- - - Million cubic feet - - -					- - - Million board feet - - -				
National Forest	45.3	39.7	1.5	3.1	1.0	151.6	133.6	5.4	9.0	3.6
Other public	29.3	22.8	2.7	2.5	1.3	116.6	92.9	11.7	7.7	4.3
Forest industry	179.2	132.2	13.5	19.6	13.9	530.4	383.1	48.6	56.5	42.2
Farmer	97.7	61.5	9.5	14.6	12.1	305.4	187.8	34.3	42.8	40.5
Miscellaneous private	180.3	114.5	17.6	26.3	21.9	583.5	358.2	66.9	88.3	70.1
All ownerships	531.8	370.7	44.8	66.1	50.2	1,687.5	1,155.6	166.9	204.3	160.7

Table 4.--Annual removals of growing stock and saw-timber on commercial forest land, by ownership class and species group, 1969

Ownership class	Growing stock					Saw-timber				
	All species	Pine	Other softwood	Soft hardwood	Hard hardwood	All species	Pine	Other softwood	Soft hardwood	Hard hardwood
	- - - Million cubic feet - - -					- - - Million board feet - - -				
National Forest	9.5	9.2	0.2	0.1	--	21.6	20.4	0.8	2.0	
Other public	16.6	13.5	--	0.9	2.2	58.7	51.8	--	37.7	4.;
Forest industry	135.1	111.3	2.7	11.5	9.6	448.1	368.2	7.0		35.2
Farmer	68.3	43.7	6.9	6.3	11.4	234.1	148.2	30.1	21.5	34.3
Miscellaneous private	118.4	82.0	8.8	15.5	12.1	391.2	274.7	32.8	41.3	42.4
All ownerships	347.9	259.7	18.6	34.3	35.3	1,153.7	863.3	70.7	102.9	116.8

Volume of growing-stock timber on the commercial forest land totals almost 10.9 billion cubic feet and includes over 30 billion board feet of sawtimber. About 63 percent of the growing-stock volume is softwood and 37 percent is hardwood. The volume is fairly well distributed by ownership in proportion to forest area, except on the National Forests where average volume per acre is one-third greater than the average for the State (table 2).

Net growth of growing stock totaled almost 532 million cubic feet in 1969 and included 1,688 million board feet of sawtimber growth. Over 78 percent of this growth was softwood and only 22 percent was hardwood. Here again, growth per acre on the National Forests was one-third greater than the average for the State (table 3).

Removals of growing stock totaled 348 million cubic feet in 1969, and included about 1,154 million board feet of sawtimber. Almost 80 percent of the removals was softwood and only 20 percent was hardwood. It was estimated that 92 percent of the removals came from privately owned forests, and forest-industry lands alone provided 39 percent of the total (table 4).

Therefore, in spite of a shrinking forest base and a growing annual timber harvest, the new findings show a 20-percent increase in the inventory of growing stock since 1959, and that net annual growth exceeds removals by an estimated 184 million cubic feet, or 53 percent. Most of the forests are now under fire protection and some 2.8 million acres, or one acre out of every six, of commercial forest have been artificially reforested. Trees *in* the older pine plantations are now attaining merchantable size, as evidenced by the finding that almost one-fifth of the gross growth of softwood in 1969 was in the form of ingrowth of small trees into the 6-inch diameter class. In many parts of the State, and particularly in the Northeast Survey Unit, the establishment of the South's "Third Forest" is already well underway.

Although the survey shows that Florida's forests are setting a pace somewhat ahead of current wood requirements, many of the findings are not favorable. For example, the 16.2 million acres currently classified as commercial forest include 2.5 million acres of nonstocked forest land and another 5.5 million acres which are poorly stocked with growing-stock trees. This means that the stocking needs to be improved on at least 8.0 million acres before even a conservative growth potential can be realized. In 1969, net annual growth of growing stock averaged only 33 cubic feet per acre, a rate that certainly must be increased if Florida's forests are to provide their proportionate share of the South's timber requirements in the years ahead.

The forthcoming State report will contain an in-depth analysis of these and other findings.

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