

**Indicator 10. Area of Forest Land and Net Area of Forest Land Available for Timber Production**

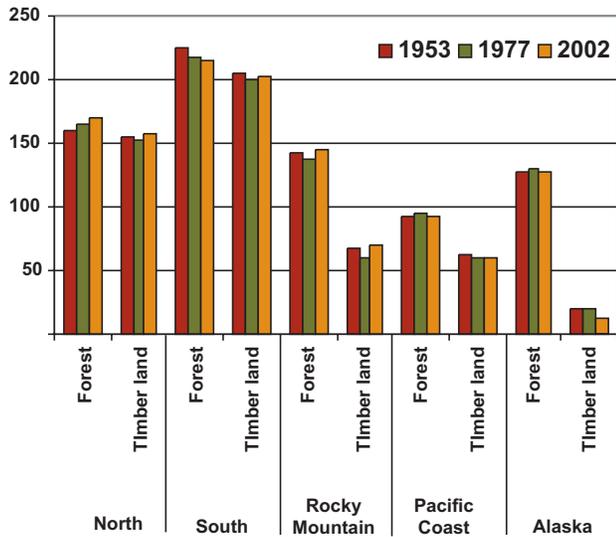


Figure 10-1. Historic forest and timber land areas by region and year

**What Is the Indicator and Why Is It Important?**

This indicator provides information fundamental to calculating the timber productive capacity of existing forests and shows how much forest is potentially available for timber production, compared with total forest area. Knowledge of the availability and capability of forest land to provide desired goods and services is a critical indicator of the balance of forest ecosystems relative to potential end uses. The multitemporal nature of the management objectives and planning guidelines for the diverse owners of the Nation’s

forests, however, makes it difficult to summarize the area of forest available for timber production in a single value at a single point in time, much less consistently over time. Within the context of this report, forest available for timber production will be defined as forest land not precluded by law or regulation from commercial harvesting of trees, or "timber land." In practice, the area available for timber production at any given time will always be a value less than total timber land. The amount of the area adjustment required to determine the actual availability of timber land will depend on the ownership mix and the management constraints in place at the time of analysis. This adjustment will also affect all other indicators in this criterion.

**What Does the Indicator Show?**

Total forest area available for timber production, or timber land, provides an aggregate view of the management/capability status of the Nation’s forests. While the 749 million acres of U.S. forest land are about equally distributed between the East (North and South regions; 384 million total acres of forest land) and the West (Rocky Mountain, Pacific Coast, and Alaska regions; 365 million total acres of forest land), timber lands make up 504 million acres (67 percent) of this total, with 361 million acres (72 percent) in the East and 143 million acres in the West. The largest areas of forest not classified as timber land are predominantly in the West. They are composed of low-density, slow-growing pinyon-juniper forests in the Rocky Mountain Region and the slow-growing mixed spruce-and-birch forests of interior Alaska. The total area of U.S. timber land has been stable over the past 50 years, with an overall loss of only 1 percent.