



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

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Hoosier NF Highlights

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What is a National Forest?



By Teena Ligman, Public Affairs Specialist

The Hoosier National Forest is one of 154 national forests managed by the U.S. Forest Service in 44 states and Puerto Rico.

President Benjamin Harrison, the only U.S. President to serve from Indiana, was a key player in the establishment of the Forest Reserves which evolved into National Forests. Congress established the Forest Reserve program in 1891 with lands in the public domain.

Congress established the Forest Service in 1905 to provide quality water and timber for the nation's benefit. Congress later directed the Forest Service to broaden its management scope for additional multiple uses and benefits and for the sustained yield of renewable resources such as water, forage, wildlife, and wood.

Since public domain lands existed almost entirely in the western United States, most of the early Forest Reserves were in the West. In 1907 the name was changed from Forest Reserve to National Forest. It was not until the enactment of the Weeks Law in 1911, that National Forests could be established in states east of the Great Plains. This law authorized Federal purchase of forest lands to protect the flow of navigable streams and timber production.

All National Forests are owned by the American people but are managed by the United States Forest Service, a federal agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Land management of these national forests focuses on conservation, timber harvesting, livestock grazing, watershed protection, wildlife, and recreation.

National Parks are managed for preservation and recreation; National Forests are managed for use and sustainability. Unlike national parks, timber cutting, mining, hunting and other active uses of natural resources on national forests is permitted, and in many cases encouraged. Another difference between National Park's and National Forest is that Parks are administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

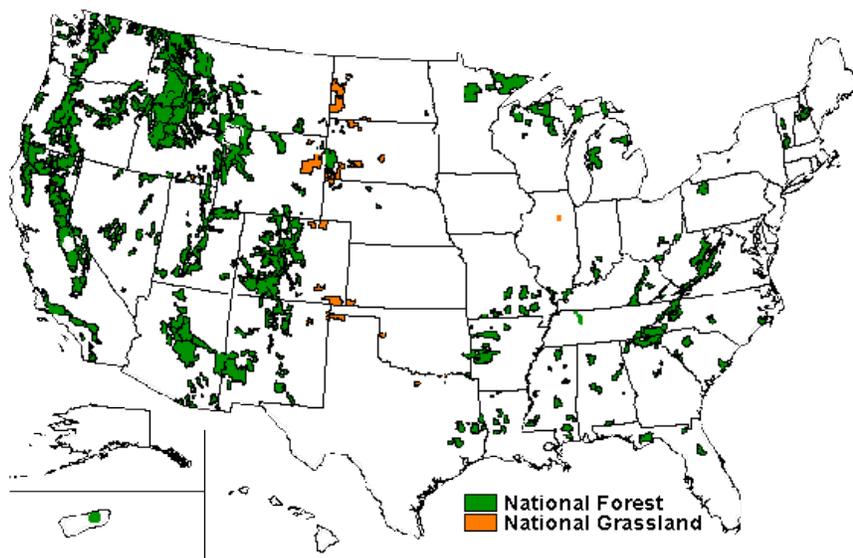
Many people confuse the Hoosier National Forest with State Forests and Parks managed by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). How does the management of state and federal forests differ? Our boundaries often blur in people's mind and our uniforms and vehicles look similar so there is little wonder that the people get the state and federal forest agencies mixed up.

Indiana state forests are also managed under the policy of multiple use and many of the premises they operate under are the same. While the management of the federal and state forest is similar; rules, permits, personnel, and funding differ. People using these lands need to be cognizant of which public lands they are on.

National forest staff work through partnerships with public and private agencies to plant trees, improve trails, educate the public, and improve conditions in areas across the Forest. The Hoosier works closely with IDNR to improve and maintain wildlife and aquatic habitat and work together on our fire program. State wildlife laws apply on national forest lands.

Gifford Pinchot, first Chief of the Forest Service, summed up the mission of the Forest Service best: "to provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run." As an agency of the federal government we answer to public across the nation, not just local residents, and work to attract visitors from across the Midwest.

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Map of national forests.



Timber harvests, providing young stands of regenerating timber are important for sustainable wildlife habitat for many species as well as young healthy timber stands.



Hunting is allowed on almost all areas of national forest lands. Contact your national forest office for maps and details.