

What About Timber Management?

Sustaining forest health and resiliency is one of the four themes of the plan. The plan will maintain and improve diversity of age classes, species composition, and fish and wildlife habitat. Timber management is a way to accomplish many objectives the Forest Service shares with the wide range of collaborators, agencies and individuals who have contributed to the plan revision process. The alternatives in the draft Environmental Impact Statement outline the variety of management approaches and where they will take place in order to accomplish plan objectives.

| Timber Management MYTH | Timber Management TRUTH |
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| <p><i>The Forest Service plans to clear cut the forest./ The Forest Service plans to cut millions of board feet. That must be the majority of the trees in the forest.</i></p> | <p>The clear cut method previously referenced large scale cutting all of the trees in an area. It was utilized to maximize the growth of a young forest comprised of sun-loving trees for future economic value and improved habitat conditions. There are many approaches to harvesting timber. The method of harvest is selected based on the management objectives for an area. For example, if an area is being managed primarily for habitat for a targeted wildlife species, timber harvesting techniques in the area would be specific to improving that habitat.</p> <p>Logging terminology can be misleading. For Western North Carolina, there is a broad average 115 board feet per mature tree, though this is highly variable based on species and tree health. Estimating board feet per acre depends on a variety of factors. Generally, if the harvest covers 25 acres, then 215,625 board feet come from that one area. If the timber sale contains five other similar areas harvested for a total of 1,078,125 board feet come from that sale of 150 acres.</p> |
| <p><i>Forest Service lands are public and should be preserved with no timber harvesting.</i></p> | <p>There are four themes of the revision of the forest plan including sustaining healthy forests. Timber management is one aspect of broader Forest Service vegetation management considerations and objectives. The U.S. Forest Service was originally established to manage water and timber resources sustainably for the benefit and enjoyment of the American public. The Forest Service is required to manage for sustainable, multiple uses of the land.</p> |
| <p><i>The Forest Service is influenced by special interest groups to cut more timber.</i></p> | <p>The Forest Service bases their timber management efforts on the work needed to meet forest plan goals for a variety of resources. Timber harvesting is a tool used to achieve forest plan goals, objectives and desired future conditions. Throughout the plan revision process we have heard from a wide range of interest groups, many of whom are supportive of vegetation management, including timber harvesting, as an effective tool to restore and maintain forest health and to restore or improve native ecosystems and wildlife habitat.</p> <p>Of the 1.1 million acres within the plan area, approximately 800 acres were harvested annually in recent years. The revised plan proposes an increase to up to 1600 acres, with an additional 2000 acres possible with the support of partners. These numbers were derived with direct input from a wide variety of collaborators, from environmental conservation to wildlife organizations to timber industry representatives, to accomplish broadly supported objectives.</p> |

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| <p><i>Timber harvesting on public lands is all about economics and not the health of the forest.</i></p> | <p>The objectives behind timber harvests on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests are restoration and maintenance of healthy forests, to vary the ages and structural diversity of the trees in the forest, create temporary early successional habitat to benefit wildlife species, to supply wood products to local communities, salvage value otherwise lost through storm or fire damage or competition from other species, or create permanent openings to increase forest aesthetics.</p> <p>A commercial timber harvest is when the logs are sold and removed from the landscape. This can benefit local economies through local logging businesses implementing the project. It can also benefit the forest because a large portion of the money paid for the timber stays in the project area and is used for other forest improvement activities such as treating invasive weeds, timber stand improvement, wildlife habitat enhancement, road maintenance, and water quality improvement.</p> <p>The Forest Service continues to support local rural communities adjacent to national forests, recognizing the economic impact of the presence of large acreages of public lands to the local tax base as well as the potential benefit gained through commercial enterprises, including local logging, outdoor recreation and tourism.</p> |
| <p><i>There will be more logging now that organizations and governments are involved in some timber sales through stewardship contracting and agreements and Good Neighbor Authority.</i></p> | <p>The amount of timber harvesting that will take place will be determined by forest plan objectives for multiple resources. In response to public input, a second tier of objectives was added to include the possibility of expanded capacity through additional resources from partners.</p> <p>The Forest Service was granted authority to broaden its approaches to timber harvests through Stewardship Contracts and Agreements starting in 2003. Stewardship contracting includes natural resource management practices seeking to promote a closer working relationship with local communities in a broad range of activities that improve land conditions. They are also a means for federal agencies to contribute to the development of sustainable rural communities, restore and maintain healthy forest ecosystems, and provide a continuing source of local income and employment. Stewardship contracting is intended to achieve key land-management goals that improve, maintain, or restore forest or rangeland health; restore or maintain water quality; improve fish and wildlife habitat; reestablish native plant species and increase their resilience to insect and disease; and reduce hazardous fuels that pose risks to communities and ecosystem values through an open, collaborative process. The legislation also requires that projects meet local and rural community needs in addition to the land management goals.</p> <p>In addition, the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) was permanently authorized in 2014. GNA allows the Forest Service to partner with states to achieve restoration and resilient landscape objectives across boundaries through cooperative agreements, including watershed restoration and forest management services on National Forest System lands. GNA is a tool to complete work on Federal and adjacent non-Federal land with a State agency where matching funds is not required but encouraged.</p> |