

Forest Management and Timber

Timber in the Blue Mountains

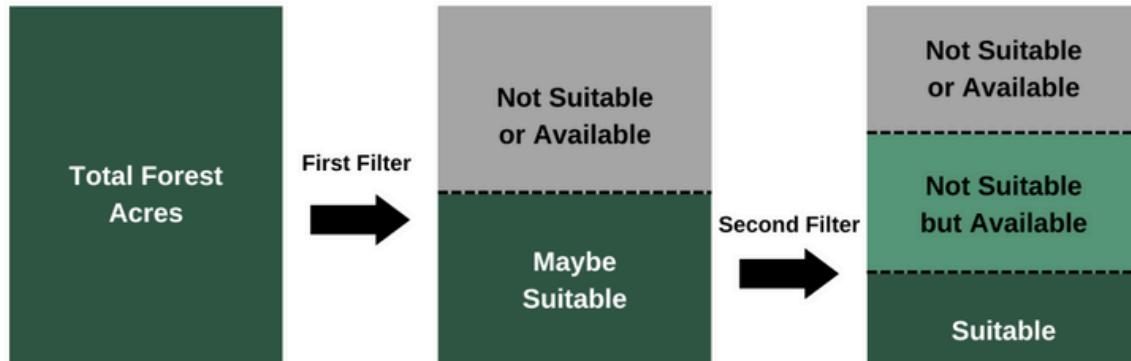
National Forests have a long history of supplying a diverse range of products that support the needs of local communities and the nation. Timber harvest on National Forests provide economic, social, and ecological benefits. Timber harvest can be an important tool to manage vegetation for ecosystem restoration, wildlife habitat, and wildland fire resilience. Timber harvest is one way the Forest Service manages the landscape to ensure the natural resources provide the multitude of benefits that the public depends on.

Timber production is the harvesting of timber as a resource whereas timber harvest is a management tool that is used to achieve desired conditions. Identification of lands not suited for timber production is required by the 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA). Timber harvest may occur on lands where timber production is both suitable and not suitable.

The Forest Plans recognize timber production and harvest as suitable uses within these landscapes. Without the local timber industry, the capability of the Forest Service to affordably manage vegetation would be limited. In looking at the current Forest conditions, several changes have influenced timber management, including:

- Available methods and technologies used to harvest timber
- Demand for wood products
- Economics of the timber industry

Timber Suitability Modeling Process



The amount of appropriate land base available to support forestry activities is an important factor influencing timber production and harvest. Within the Forest Plan, timber suitability modeling identifies which lands could be managed for sustained timber production. Lands are classified as either suitable Lands, not suitable but available Lands, or not suitable or available lands.

Forest Management

The 1990 forest plans focused on traditional forest practices that involved forest management to tend and regenerate the forest. Changes in national forest policy, amendments to the 1990 forest plans, and societal shifts in public involvement of the management of national forests have changed towards ecological forestry practices. Objectives of active forest management today focus on removing smaller diameter trees, reducing fuels that increase fire hazard, shifting species composition, and managing to protect and promote old trees and wildlife habitat.

Forest Service projects have evolved from being primarily focused on timber resources to promoting forest health and resiliency from a multi-resource perspective, while still contributing to and supporting local economies as well as growing and expanding new markets. New science and monitoring within the Blue Mountains national forests have helped inform this shift.

Similar to other resource areas, much has changed since the current Forest Plans were completed in the 1990s, including conditions on the ground, community needs, and the science that informs forest management. Past timber management practices, land management policies, decades of fire suppression, and a warming climate have modified the conditions of the Blue Mountains National Forests in ways that have led to:

- increased density of trees on the landscape
- less diversity in tree species and spacing on the landscape
- increased amount of shade, drought, and fire intolerant species on the landscape
- larger and more severe wildfires
- increased occurrences of insect and disease outbreaks
- longer and sustained drought conditions

Looking Forward

National Forests have a long history of supplying a diverse range of forest products that support the needs of local communities and the American people. The Blue Mountains National Forests recognize that timber production and harvest activities are important tools to manage vegetation for ecosystem restoration, wildlife habitat, and wildland fire resilience. In addition, timber harvest activities are important economic contributors that our communities rely on. The revision process is our chance to address needed changes to forest management in ways that reflect desired conditions on the ground and in our communities.

