

# WHERE THE FORESTS ARE

— BY JEFF EASTERLING

**WE'VE TALKED BEFORE** about the mistaken impression that American forests are in danger, that deforestation is taking over, and that all harvesting of trees is bad (it's not). As lumber retailers, how's your forestry knowledge? Do you know which states are among the most forested? What about a few basic forestry facts? Read on!

## The U.S. Forestry Industry

Here's a Fun Forest Fact (#FFF) for you: Forested land in the U.S. is increasing or maintaining, while the lumber industry is still going strong. What's the secret? Strong replanting programs and well-managed forests. How about a few more FFFs?

- Are forests shrinking? No. On average, the forest industry plants three-to-five trees annually for each one harvested. In fact, there are more forests in the U.S. today than there were when Thomas Jefferson drank tea at Monticello.

- Will we ever run out of wood? Not in this lifetime, or that of our children, or even their children's children. Wood is naturally renewable: it's not a finite product, and it's not even close to disappearing. It is the only renewable building material.

- Are our forests in danger? No! Our forests are growing, expanding, and healthy—which is good news to those of us who live among them. It's okay to print those emails; our NELMA members will keep growing even more trees.

## The Most Forested States

There are a few ways to approach these statistics: if we're comparing actual forested acres of land, then the clear winners are Alaska and Texas, with California coming in a distant third, followed by Oregon, Montana, New Mexico, Georgia, Alabama, Colorado and Washington rounding out the top 10.

But let's shift the lens and look at states with the highest percentage of land covered by forests: then we're looking at Maine in the number one spot (it's not called the Pine Tree State for nothing!), with approximately 90% of the state covered by beautiful eastern white pine, the eastern spruces, balsam fir, among other species.



Following Maine is its neighbor New Hampshire (84%), then West Virginia (79%), Vermont (78%), Alabama (71%), South Carolina (68%), Georgia (67%), Mississippi (65%), Virginia (63%), and New York (63%).

What's noteworthy here is that forested land in the U.S. is still going strong... and so is the lumber industry. Aggressive replanting programs and well-managed forests east of the Mississippi get the credit for the robust forest industry. Let's close with a few more valuable facts from our friends at the USDA:

- The U.S. is home to approximately 823 million acres of forests and woodlands, and these areas has been stable-to-increasing for decades.

- Forests and woodlands have becoming more and more accessible and available to Americans. Our infrastructure and network of roads is such that any person in the country can now travel to within one mile of over 88% of our forested land.

- Urban trees are a thing, and their value continues to grow! Not only do city trees reduce the energy needed for heating and cooling by a significant amount annually, but they also give back to us by producing about 67 million tons of oxygen.

Forestry is a huge business in the United States and will be for a long time. The more you know, the more you understand that this is a very, very good thing.



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