



CALIFORNIA FORESTRY 2050

What do we want our forests to look like, and how do we get there?

The Background

- Forest ecosystems cover approximately 40% of California. Of this, about half – or 17 million acres – meet the Society of American Foresters definition of timberland¹. This represents almost 1/5th of the state's entire land area.
- Approximately half of California's timberlands are privately owned. The remainder is public, managed by agencies like the U. S. Forest Service and National Park Service.
- ***The Golden State's population, currently 35 million people, is projected to increase to 49 million people by 2025² – and to exceed 60 million by the middle of the century.***
- With expanding population, demands upon California timberlands for both commodity and non-commodity benefits will continually intensify.
- Californians consume 8-10 billion board feet (BBF) in lumber products each year.³ Our wood consumption is expected to rise with population.
- The proportion of California's wood needs met by timber harvested within the state has plummeted since 1990. Multiple, overlapping environmental constraints have triggered a rapid contraction of the state's forest products industry. Timber harvest in 1990 was 4.0 BBF; by 2001 that level had declined to 1.6 BBF.⁴
- We are currently harvesting and utilizing less than a quarter of the wood that our timberlands are growing⁵ – far below sustainable yield. As a result, we now import 80% of our wood from other states and nations.

The Environmental Threat

- California's increased reliance on wood imports causes a net negative impact on the global environment. Our temperate forests are more biologically resilient and renewable than most other wooded ecosystems on the planet. We also have in place some of the world's most stringent forest practice standards, providing comprehensive environmental protections on both public and private timberlands in the state. Rejecting sustainable forest management here at home is a denial of our resource stewardship responsibilities.

¹ Timberland: Lands capable of growing 20 ft.³/acre/year of wood volume.

² U.S. Census Bureau population projection.

³ California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

⁴ State Board of Equalization, Timber Tax Division.

⁵ California Licensed Foresters Association.

Threat (cont.):

- As California's population surges in the coming decades, the state's ***forest landowners will face increasing opportunities to sell out and develop their lands, rather than managing them for the long term as working forests.***
- Uncontrolled regulatory costs can only worsen this trend. Without clearly foreseeable economic returns from forest management activities, landowners will find it expedient (if not necessary) to sell out to development interests. These interests can be expected to move aggressively to convert California's native forest ecosystems to more lucrative land uses.
- In a cascading sequence of unintended consequences, ***millions of acres of California's native forest ecosystems could be permanently fragmented, bulldozed and paved over between now and 2050.***

The Environmental Solution

- State leaders must recognize the enormous social, ecological and economic pressures facing California's timberlands in the coming decades.
- ***Policies must emerge which actively nurture and sustain an economically vital timber industry in California, supporting a vast rural network of managed forest greenbelts.*** The default alternative is accelerated forest conversion, development, loss of open space and biological diversity.
- A stable homegrown forest products industry will also strengthen rural economies while decreasing our dubious reliance on imported wood products.
- California's professional foresters are eager to launch this discussion now, while there is still time to vision ourselves a more hopeful future.

What do we want our forests to look like in 2050?

How are we going to get there?

The California Licensed Foresters Association, with approximately 800 members, represents the common interests of Registered Professional Foresters in the State of California. The Association provides opportunities for continuing education and public outreach to its membership, which includes diverse professionals affiliated with public agencies, private timber companies, consultants and the academic community. Governed by an elected Board of Directors, CLFA was established in 1980 after the passage of the landmark California Professional Foresters Law.