



# TENNESSEE FOREST RESOURCE ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY





### Cover Map

The many benefits of Tennessee's forests are as diverse as the resource itself. This map illustrates some of the various benefits of the forest across the state while also depicting representative landscapes of each region. The regions are representative of the major watersheds, and are used to highlight the strong and vital relationship between healthy forests and water quality. (graphic by Art Colebank)

### Acknowledgements

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This project was partially funded by a grant from the National Association of State Foresters in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service State & Private Forestry. The cooperation and contributions of several state government agencies and nongovernmental organizations helped to produce this document including: Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry, University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture and Department of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Tennessee Wildlife Federation, Tennessee Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, Tennessee Forestry Association, Tennessee Conservation Commission, Tennessee Valley Authority, Land Trust for Tennessee, Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts, the USDA Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service.

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Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Auth. No. 325401, 1,000 copies, September 2010.

This public document was promulgated at a cost of \$11.50 per printed copy.

**STATE OF TENNESSEE****PHIL BREDESEN**  
GOVERNOR

September 1, 2010

Dear Tennessee Citizens,

I am pleased to present the Tennessee Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy, a comprehensive long-range plan for addressing important forest resource issues in our state. The plan provides an analysis of forest conditions and trends. The report also identifies top issues and priority areas with an emphasis on conserving working forest landscapes, protecting forests from harm, and enhancing public benefits from trees and forests.

A central public benefit addressed by this plan is the importance of forest resources in regard to water quality and quantity. Tennesseans require and deserve an adequate, healthy water supply. Forests act as living filters and sponges that are capable of intercepting and trapping sediments, and storing and transforming excess nutrients and pollutants carried in runoff from adjacent lands. Healthy forests help promote natural solutions for our water resource management needs.

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Division of Forestry, developed this plan with the valuable support of several government and non-governmental organizations, as well as with input from a variety of citizens and forest stakeholders. These partnerships help to accomplish our commonly held conservation goals. This plan highlights the commitment of these partners through their dedication to strategy implementation.

I am pleased to introduce a plan that will conserve, protect and enhance Tennessee's forest resources over the next several years and beyond.

Warmest regards,

Phil Bredesen



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Forest  
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Date: **AUG 20 2010**

Steven Scott  
State Forester  
TN Department of Agriculture-Division of Forestry  
Box 40627, Melrose Station  
Nashville, TN 37204

Dear Steve,

I want to personally congratulate you and your staff on delivering your statewide forest resource assessment and strategy. On behalf of Secretary Vilsack and Chief Tidwell, I officially approved your documents as meeting the requirements of the Farm Bill on August 6, 2010.

Collectively, the assessments and strategies provide a blueprint for the future of forest management in the continental United States and its associated islands and territories. Identifying forest conditions and trends, along with priority issues and landscapes, sets the stage for states and partners to leverage resources on strategic investments that will benefit the public and the nation's forests today and in the future.

Approval of the assessments and strategies is the beginning. The implementation phase will be ripe with opportunities for the Forest Service to work with you and your partners in exciting and innovative ways. As we proceed together to put your strategy in to action, I look forward to your thoughts on how we can continue to improve and refine our delivery of state and private forestry programs on the landscape.

Sincerely,

JAMES E. HUBBARD  
Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry

cc: Elizabeth Agpaoa





# TENNESSEE FOREST RESOURCE ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY

*A comprehensive forest resource assessment and strategy to address forest-related conditions, trends, threats and opportunities in Tennessee.*

*June 2010*

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## Executive Summary

The forests of Tennessee are as diverse as they are expansive. The unique shape of this state stretches across multiple regions of changing topography, geology, and ecology – each having significant influence on the type and breadth of the forest resource.

This statewide assessment and strategy examines, from a snap-shot point of view, the current conditions, trends, threats, and opportunities of the forest resource. The goal is to identify the highest priority areas where forest resource professionals and stakeholders can implement the most efficient and effective response to issues in those areas.

The forest resource itself is vast and had been expanding over the past several decades. It now appears this expansion has settled and could turn direction as its greatest threat – urbanization and development – push back prior gains. Management of the resource – and, to a much greater degree, the lack of management – is heavily impacting the state of the forests as ownership and objectives change. This, coupled with more natural influences – like insect, disease, and atmospheric events – brings significant threats to the resource and presents multiple challenges for stakeholders and resource professionals to address them.

With any threat however, there is opportunity to grow in many ways unforeseen in the past. There is opportunity to learn how the forests respond to multiple threats and management decisions. There is opportunity to explore emerging markets for resource benefits we have to date thought of as inherent benefits of healthy working forests. And, of course, there is great opportunity to expand

education and outreach to landowners, policy makers, professional partners and the greater public on the benefits forests provide to society and the need for greater management.

Perhaps second to none of the benefits that forests provide to society is that they provide clean water. Healthy forests act as a natural water filtration system, and, if we are to continue to provide natural solutions to conserving the quality of water delivered to our communities, we must start with ensuring our forests remain as forests. This benefit is central to the theme of this assessment and strategy.

Assessments and responses to conditions, trends, threats, and opportunities of forest resources are not the responsibility of any one agency, but must be tackled with a multi-disciplinary approach. As such, this assessment and strategy is a compilation of ideas grouped together from multiple agencies, partners, and forest resource stakeholders including landowners and the general public. Finding mutual consensus on any given issue can be difficult for so many stakeholders to come to, but, in the end, this process builds a stronger framework for implementation of strategies. It is up to each stakeholder to build support, find common ground, and move forward to work together to implement strategies and satisfy objectives. Only this multidisciplinary approach can lead to the ultimate goal of conserving, protecting, and enhancing our forest resources of Tennessee.

Steven G. Scott  
State Forester



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and Conservation

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Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

Dear Tennessee Forest Stakeholder:

You have in your hands the most comprehensive long-range forest resource strategic plan ever completed in our state. Members of the Tennessee Forestry Commission greatly appreciate the hard work put forth by Tennessee Forest Stakeholders in making this plan what it represents.

The Tennessee Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy documents detail important aspects of our forest resources including conditions, trends, threats and opportunities while providing strategies to address the major issues prevalent in the highest priority areas. Implementing these strategies will prove to be a worthy undertaking.

If the level of cooperation from various forest resource stakeholders in development of this long-range plan is any indication, then successful implementation of the plan is already off to a good start.

Once again, may we of the Commission say we're impressed with the partnerships and how they worked together for over 18 months to develop this plan. It speaks to their commitment to this important effort.

One of the responsibilities of the Tennessee Forestry Commission as established by the legislature under T.C.A. 11-4-201 is to approve the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry's comprehensive long-range plan for the State's forest resources. The Tennessee Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy justly serves to that end and is hereby approved by this Commission.

Sincerely,

  
Bill C. Williams  
Chairman





## Introduction

The 2008 Farm Bill amended the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 directing States to develop a long-term Statewide Assessment and Strategy for Forest Resources.

The purpose was to determine the status of the forest resource through an assessment—what's there, who owns it, what are its threats, and how can federal funds help to manage it. Strategies would then need to be developed to address issues raised from the assessment. The completion of the assessment and strategy enables the states to be eligible to apply and compete for federal funds through an annual grant cycle.

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry led the effort to complete the assessment and prepare the strategy in this state. It was a goal for this assessment and strategy not only to address national private forest conservation priorities, but also to be a useful tool to a wide range of organizations and individuals in Tennessee to address forest resource issues pertinent to this state. Where possible it compliments other state agency assessments, such as the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency's State Wildlife Action Plan, with a particular focus tied to maintaining water quality and quantity.

Through cooperation and commitment, the assessment and strategies set forth in this statewide forest resource plan will be highly relevant and useful to a variety of organizations and individuals. Input from knowledgeable forest resource stakeholders was vital to achieve this objective.

Forest landowners, natural resource professionals, and interested stakeholders were all a part of this planning process since the start. The Department of Agriculture Commissioner Ken Givens appointed a Steering Committee to guide and give oversight to the work. The Steering Committee in turn enlisted the help of a diverse team of recognized experts to conduct the assessment and formulate appropriate strategies to address the findings. This team, known as the Forest Resource Assessment Working Committee, labored steadily for over a year to make sure the results of their work were both credible and highly useful to the forestry community.

### The Assessment

Tennessee's forest resource assessment provides a comprehensive analysis of the forest-related conditions, trends, threats, and opportunities within the state using a combination of qualitative, quantitative, and geospatial data that provides information relevant to key issues to the state while also addressing national priorities of conserving, protecting and enhancing the forest resource. The assessment was done collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders to ensure that critical issues were captured, and allowed focus of federal and state resources on priority landscape areas with the greatest opportunity to address shared management priorities and achieve measurable outcomes. Program input was solicited from the USDA State Technical Committee at two of their annual allocation meetings. Additionally, three of the USDA State Technical Committee members served on the Assessment's Steering Committee and four served on the Assessment's Working Committee.



## Strategy

Tennessee's forest resource strategy follows the assessment by providing a long-term, comprehensive, coordinated plan for investing state, federal, and partner resources to address the management and landscape priorities identified in the assessment. It incorporates existing statewide forest resource management plans, and provides the basis for future program, agency, and partner coordination.

The dominant issues identified in the assessment were grouped together under seven broad categories. The issue categories identified include:

- 1. Forest Health**
- 2. Public Benefits**
- 3. Private Lands**
- 4. Urban Forestry**
- 5. Forest Industry**
- 6. Education and Outreach**
- 7. Wildlife and Natural Heritage**

With the aide of resource professionals with proven skills in addressing the issues identified in the assessment, strategies were developed for each issue to seize opportunities and minimize threats to Tennessee's forest resources.

These strategies when utilized in cooperation with our partners will help to conserve working forest landscapes, protect forests from harm, and enhance public benefits from trees and forests.



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