

FORWARD

Our forests remain a critical element in Maryland's landscape. Not only are they environmentally important, but forests also contribute to our economic and social well-being. To know if Maryland's forests are being managed in a sustainable way, we need to be able to take a periodic snapshot (analysis) of the status and trends of the forest resources. The U.S. Forest Service, Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) Program, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources – Forest Service, has previously inventoried Maryland's forests in 1950, 1964, 1976, 1986 and 1999. In 1999, periodic inventories were replaced with annualized inventories in which a portion of the field plots are inventoried each year, and a full inventory is completed every 5 years. The first full inventory using the annualized data for Maryland was completed in 2008 and covers the period of 2004 to 2008. This report is an analysis of that inventory.

The forests which are vital to our quality of life have been under continual pressure since colonial times. First these threats were the result of unrestricted clearing and harvesting. Land was cleared for farming as the once awe-inspiring forests were seen as obstacles to progress. Wood was the fuel and building material of choice for a young and growing nation. After World War II, the country was growing and forests were lost at an alarming rate to make room for new homes and businesses. Today our forests face new threats —exotic invasive plants and insects such as gypsy moth and emerald ash borer threaten the health and diversity of our forests. Demographic trends continue to change the face of our forests through land-use conversion, forest fragmentation, and parcelization.

Still our forests provide us with many benefits every day which, unfortunately, we have become accustomed to and take for granted. Without healthy forests, we will not have quality air and water to meet our most basic needs. Forest land provides habitat for the wildlife we enjoy and is so vital to the fabric of our planet. Even during this age of technological advances, wood is still our "greenest" and most basic building material, and we are increasingly seeking the forest as a place to escape the pressures of modern life.

This document describes and highlights the current status and trends of Maryland's forests. The trends that have been portrayed in earlier versions of this inventory have led to the Maryland Seed Tree Law and the Forest Conservation Act.

I hope you will look beyond the numbers and figures presented here to come to a more complete appreciation of the grandeur that are our trees and forests and the opportunities and risks we all face together.

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