

INTRODUCTION

Florida's forests cover a vast area of the Sunshine State and almost one half of the state's 35 million acres is in forest. Florida's forests support an industry that generates more than \$4.5 billion annually. Many Floridians owe their income and livelihood to Florida's forests and the products they produce. Wood and wood fibers are turned into more than 10,000 useful products that are used in homes, industry, and schools.

Aside from the wood- and fiber-producing aspects, Florida's forests contribute to the health of the state's ecosystems and provide numerous recreational opportunities. Floridians and tourists regularly visit Florida's national, state, and private forests in search of an outdoor experience. Forests offer canoeing, hiking, horseback riding, off-road motorcycling, camping, and many other activities.

Trees around residences, in city parks, and along streets, as well as in rural areas, cleanse the air of pollutants and act as sound barriers along noisy roadways. Trees shield buildings from sun and offer protection from the cold, reducing cooling and heating costs. In Florida's larger cities, urban forests provide an oasis of green in a desert of steel and concrete.

Forestry is defined as the art and science of managing forests and related natural resources to meet the demands of society. Timber production is merged with wildlife management, soil and water conservation, range management, recreational needs, and other simultaneous land uses in today's forestry management. The benefits of forests and trees to the people of Florida are far-reaching and affect almost every aspect of society.