



Protecting and conserving  
Georgia's forests.

Ensuring that Georgia maintains  
healthy, sustainable forests  
providing clean air, clean water,  
and abundant forest products for  
generations to come.

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# Executive Summary of the Georgia Sustainable Forest Management Report

Prepared by the Georgia Forestry Commission  
for the Georgia General Assembly July 1, 2008





## Executive Summary

Georgia's forests are being sustainably managed to meet the numerous needs of our state today. To ensure our forests will continue to meet the ever increasing demands of future generations, many challenges must be met. Success will depend on proactive decisions by our state leaders and the entire forestry community addressing a myriad of forestry-related issues.



**Georgia's forest area has remained stable over the past 50 years** at about 24 million acres. Approximately 92% of this acreage is privately owned. However, ownership patterns have been changing and average parcel sizes are shrinking. This is due to a number of factors, including the effects of urbanization and the tremendous divestiture of forest industry-owned lands. Several issues, such as state and local tax structures and the strength of forest product markets, affect the economic viability of owning and managing forest land.

**Fifty-five Georgia counties are dependent on forestry activity**, and while the number of mills has declined, total productivity remains high. Strong markets for forest products are crucial to the future of traditional pulp and paper, lumber, and pole supplies. Forest growth well exceeds removals and is available to supply global and local markets. The development of a forest resource-based bioenergy industry is poised to contribute significantly to Georgia's economy and reduce our dependence on nonrenewable fossil fuels.

**Georgia's forests provide valuable ecological services** that help supply our state with clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, and recreation opportunities. With two out of every three falling raindrops in Georgia landing on forest lands, the sustainable management of our forests is one of the most significant factors affecting our water quality and quantity. The General Assembly's recent adoption of the Statewide Water Management Plan recognizes Forestry's Best Management Practices as a model program that other land use practitioners should emulate. Carbon sequestration is an emerging ecological market opportunity that will soon provide additional incentives for landowners to keep their property forested.



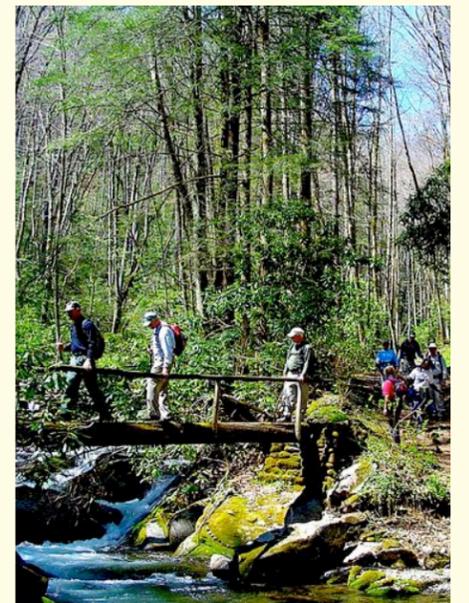
**Forestry professionals ensure public safety by providing fire prevention services** in the form of prescribed fire as well as wildfire suppression. The health and sustainability of Georgia's forests are dependent on attention to both. Urbanization places more lives and property at risk from wildfire and greatly complicates the management of wildfires and prescribed fires.



**Urban sprawl and fragmentation impact natural habitat and the nature services forestry provides.** Forest recreation contributes \$1.8 billion annually to Georgia. A system of public and private conservation strategies is needed to support forest and wildlife sustainability. The professional use of prescribed fire and the eradication of invasive plants and animals are needed to maintain the full suite of habitats required by native species. Expansion of the Georgia Land Conservation Program supports this goal, as does the State Wildlife Action Plan.

**The cooperative efforts of a diverse group of natural resource professionals developing this report** have confirmed the need for a comprehensive statewide assessment of Georgia's forest resources. The Georgia Forestry Commission has initiated a comprehensive assessment and action plan that will be completed in April, 2010.

**With the wise use of knowledge and resources**, Georgians can keep our forests sustainable for present and future generations.



**Georgia boasts about 24 million acres of forest land.** The forest industry contributes \$27.7 billion to Georgia's economy and tree inventory volumes are at an all time high. We have 78% more cubic feet of wood growing in Georgia than we did 50 years ago. However, the state's population is increasing at a record rate, and 106 acres of forest land are lost to development daily. These and other trends threaten forest sustainability and the numerous economic, environmental, and social benefits that our thriving forests provide.

