



What's at Stake

There are [765 million](#) forestland acres covering the U.S. today. The majority of forestland, [443 million](#) (or 69%), is privately managed. [238 million](#) acres (31%) are federally managed, and state and local governments oversee [84 million](#) acres.

The forest products industry has an annual economic [output](#) of \$288 billion and employs 950,000 people. Approximately [159 million](#) people visit the U.S. Forest Service-managed forestlands each year.

Environmentalists argue that forests must be rewilded and returned to pre-human settlement conditions to allow them to flourish. That is a false choice. Healthy forests, instead, are a result of [proactive](#) forest management practices.

Millions of Forestland Acres at Risk

- [Almost half](#) (177 million acres) of federal forestland is poorly managed, overgrown, and fire-prone.
- [Twenty percent](#) of California's sequoia trees have been destroyed due to poor management practices.

Forest Projects Held Back by Lawsuits from Environmentalists

- Due to red tape and bureaucratic bloat, it takes [years](#) of environmental review to approve forest management projects.
- The 2015 *Cottonwood* decision [weaponized](#) the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to block forest restoration projects.

The Way Forward

Policymakers should craft rules that expedite environmental reviews of forest management projects that won't lead to the decimation of the environment.

- In March 2025, the Trump administration [issued](#) an executive order to expand American timber production.
- The bipartisan [Fix Our Forests Act](#) is a comprehensive bill to promote forest health, reduce frivolous lawsuits, and make communities impacted by high-intensity wildfires more resilient.
- The House [introduced](#) the Ending Endless Litigation Act to challenge the 2015 *Cottonwood* decision that blocks forest projects.

Addressing Misperceptions

MISPERCEPTIONS	FACTS
Climate change is the root cause of high-intensity wildfires.	Climate isn't the top cause behind wildfires. A 2023 University of Montana study found that 76% of destructive wildfires in the Western U.S., between 2010 and 2020, were started by humans. A 2021 IOP Science study revealed that the main factors behind catastrophic wildfires are live fuel (53%), weather (23%), and climate change (14%).
Forest management will harm wildlife.	Wildlife needs food, shelter, water, and space. Managed forests can meet two of these habitat needs. By managing forest characteristics, wildlife can thrive. Proactive forest management is also essential to stop the threat posed by invasive species like certain beetles.
There are fewer forests in the U.S. today than in the past.	A recent United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Global Forest Resources Assessment report determined the U.S. was No. 7 of the top ten countries "for average annual net gain in forest area, 2010–2020." There was a 77% increase in U.S. land occupied by trees in urban settings during this timeframe.