

forestry & natural resources

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

THE FORESTS OF INDIANA

by W. L. Fix, Extension Forester

History records that in 1669, LaSalle was the first white man to see Indiana.

Ten years later, he came down the St. Joseph River in Indiana, crossed over near South Bend to the Kankakee River and then went south via the Illinois River and the Mississippi. On his first voyage, LaSalle described the area along the Wabash as being heavily wooded, while that adjacent to the Kankakee, he wrote, was partly grassland.

The exact acreage of the original Indiana woodlands is not known. Stanley Coulter, one of the early conservationists of the state, reported in 1899, "Originally, seven-eighths (87½ percent) of the 23,000,000 acres comprising the area of the state was covered with a dense growth of timber...With the exception of Benton county and parts of other counties in the northwestern section of the state, Indiana for the most part was covered with one of the finest stands of hardwoods in America."

The Early Forests

The early forests were both a blessing and a burden. As a blessing, they provided shelter, fuel and furniture. They supplied rails for fences, planks for roads, lumber for boats, and rafts, barrels and casks, and even machinery parts, as the wooden wheels of an old grist mill at Spring Mill State Park so eloquently testify.

Standing timber, on good land, was in the way of agriculture. Clearing it for cropping was a strenuous, burdensome task. Strangely enough, few settlers would buy prairie land if it did not include some woodland. In letters written by Jacob Schramm, who settled in Indiana in 1836, he stated, "If the prairie is too big, however, and has no woods near, it is not habitable and is not purchased even if the soil is the finest."

The vastness of the original hardwood forests and the persistence of natural sprouting when these were cut, led early settlers into thinking that good timber sufficient for all needs would always be at hand. Long ago we found that this was not true.

The Forests Today

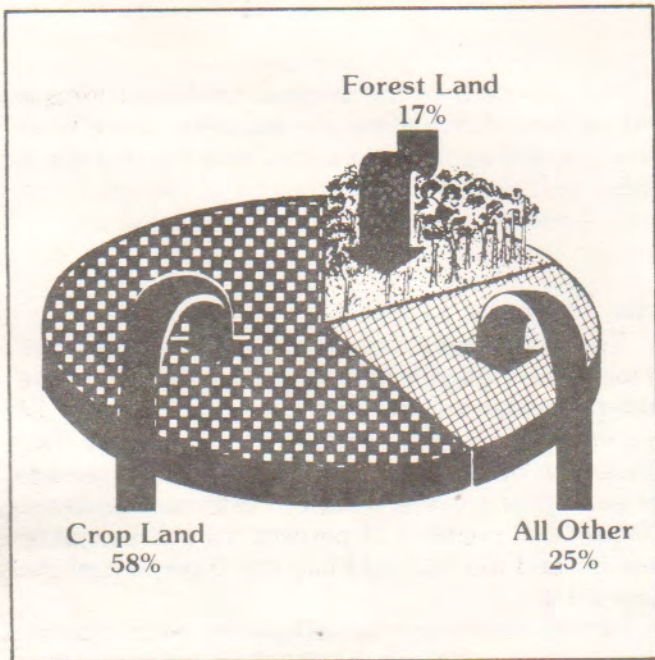
Today in Indiana there are about 3.9 million acres of forest land. Slightly more than 3.8 million acres are commercial timberland. As the map shows, about 24 percent of this is in the northern part of the state. The remainder, or 76 percent, is divided among three major geological areas of southern Indiana. The lower Wabash unit contains 21 percent, the Knobs unit 46 percent and the Upland Flats unit 9 percent of the state total.

Indiana forests are owned by many people. Farmers own the largest amount of timberland. Altogether they own more than 2,500,000 acres, or 67 percent of all timberland. About 22 percent of the forest land is owned by coal companies, water companies, sawmill companies, estates, and other private owners. Public agencies, including cities, counties, the state, and federal government, own the remaining 11 percent of land in forests.

Thus we see that nearly 90 percent of all the forest land in Indiana is privately owned.

The important and valuable hardwood tree species are white and red oaks, walnut, cherry, tulip poplar, sugar maple, ash, hickory and basswood. Tulip poplar, or tuliptree, is the State tree. Native evergreen species have not been common in Indiana since the glaciers receded several thousand years ago. However, natural growth of white and jack pine is found in limited areas of Northern Indiana counties. Hemlock occurs in a few places along

watercourses. In southern Indiana, Virginia pine occurs in the hilly knobs unit near the Ohio River. Red cedar is also common in many counties. For many years the coniferous (evergreen) trees have been widely planted all over Indiana to rebuild worn-out soils, prevent erosion, serve as wind-breaks and for various other special purposes, such as Christmas trees. Indiana's total land area is an estimated 23.1 million acres. Of this area, forests occupy 17 percent.



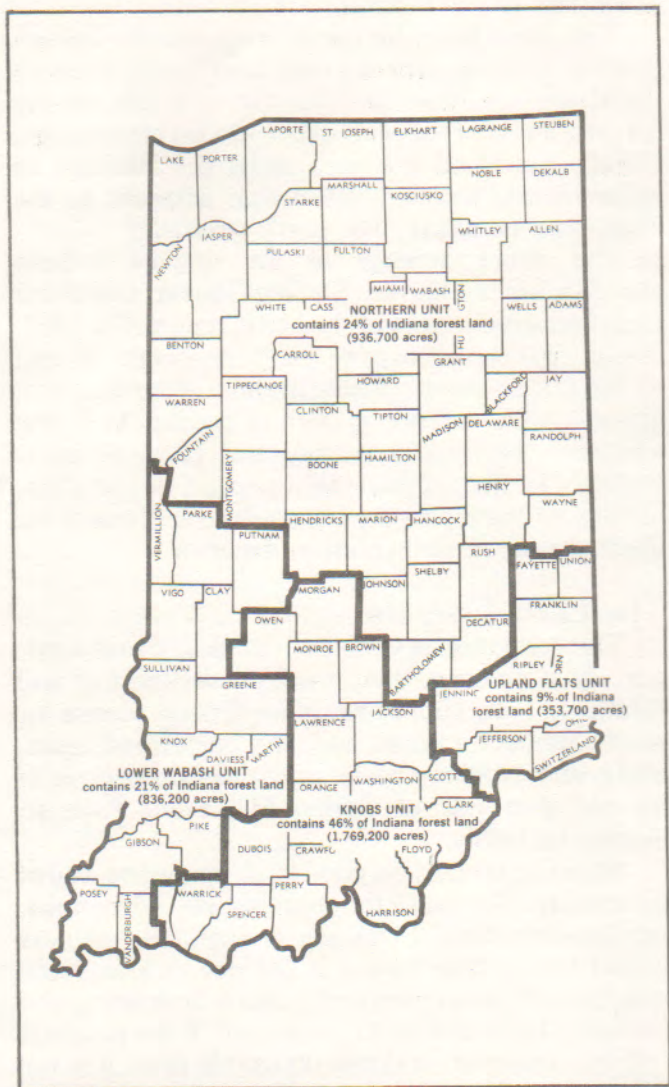
Forest Products

High-quality hardwoods once grew in Indiana, and they can do so again. For many years, our timber has sold for premium prices for many highly important and special products. Because of this quality and abundance, many wood-using industries are located in the State. Today, Indiana is one of the leading producers of furniture and hardwood veneer, though much of the lumber comes from other states.

From the sale of standing timber, logs, bolts, posts, pulpwood, and other products, woodland owners receive annually over \$55 million. Much of this material goes to wood-using industries, where it is processed by more than 43,000 workers, whose salaries and wages exceed \$440 million. In economic terms—salaries, wages, power, machinery, interest

and profit—the manufacturer of forest products contributes heavily to the state's economy. Our forests are one of our important natural resources. They are renewable and will continue to yield wealth to our farmers, to labor, and to industries year after year, if they are properly managed.

Adequate protection and sound management could increase both the quality and quantity of woodlands. The quantity of products harvested could be more than doubled, and this could mean more wealth-producing industries. Better woodlands could supply additional areas for recreation, aid water conservation, furnish wildlife habitats and reduce weather extremes.

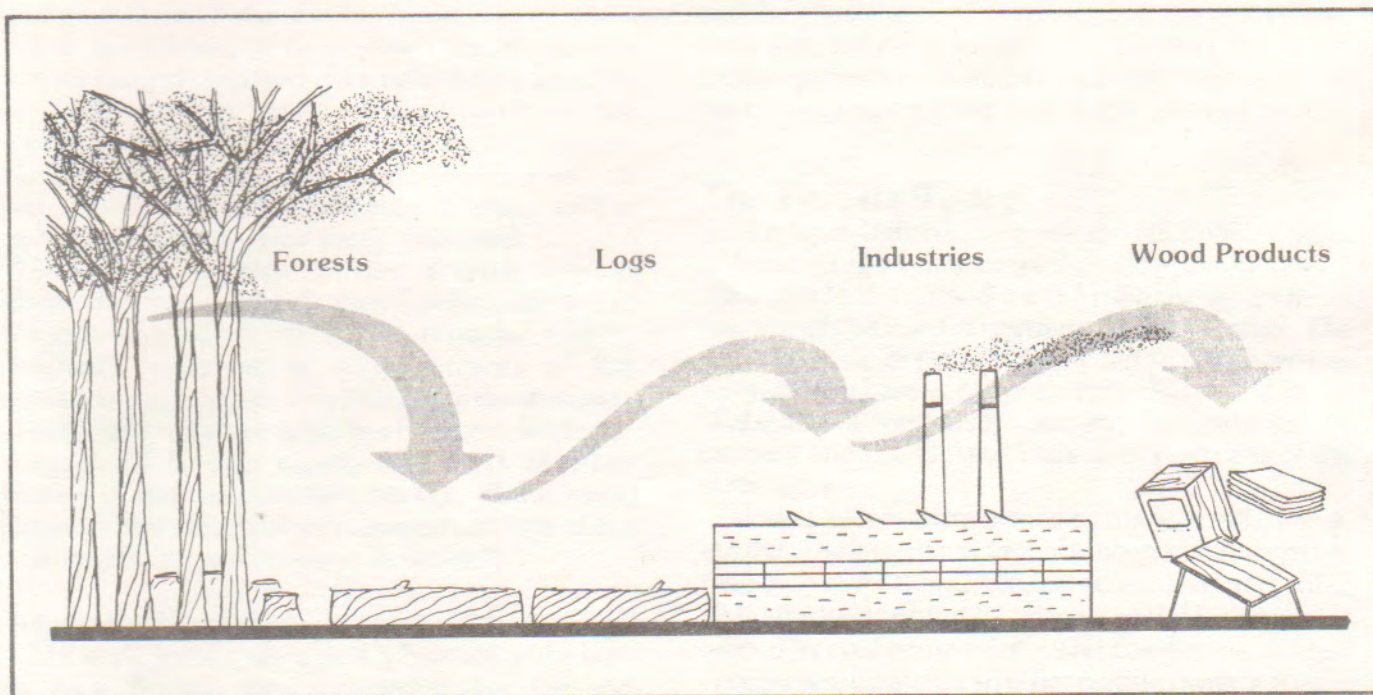


Forest Management

More timber, and better quality timber, can be grown in Indiana if proper care is given our woodlands. To practice good forestry, the following steps should be taken:

1. Plan the land according to its best use.
2. Take livestock out of the woods.
3. Establish and maintain firebreaks.
4. Make periodic harvests to improve timber growth and to establish new reproduction.
5. Release crop trees from competing culls and vines.
6. Plant pines on "worn-out" or "farmed-out" land as a nurse crop to restore the hardwood forests of Indiana. The pines are useful also for erosion control, wildlife habitat, windbreaks and Christmas trees.

Further information or additional copies of this publication can be obtained through your county Extension agent, nearest forester, or the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.



Timber sold by woodland owners is valued over \$55 million. The value added by manufacturing in both the primary and secondary industries exceeds \$850 million. Salaries and wages of wood-workers exceed \$440 million a year. (Bureau of Census, 1977).

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