

# Kentucky Forest Fact Sheet

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## Land Area, Forests, and Timberlands

Twelve million acres, 47 percent of Kentucky's 25,425,904 acres, are covered in forest. Kentucky lost more than 700,000 acres of forest between 1988 and 2004, mostly due to the conversion of forest for development purposes. Of the 12 million acres of forest, 11.6 million acres are classified as timberland. Timberlands are capable of growing commercial timber, producing at least 115 board feet of wood volume per acre per year (a board foot is 12" x 12" x 1"). This acreage has decreased 6% since 1988. Forest conversion is recognized as one of the most serious threats to forests in Kentucky.

## Forest Ownership

Approximately 423,000 private individuals own 78 percent of Kentucky's timberland, while corporations own 13 percent (including 2 percent owned by forest industry). Nine percent is publicly owned (including 5 percent in national forests).

## Forest Industry

Approximately 37,500 Kentuckians are employed by the 1,125 wood industries in the state. Out of Kentucky's 120 counties, 112 have at least one wood-based company. The annual payroll (excluding benefits) for the wood industry is approximately \$820 million. Wood industries employ one out of every nine manufacturing workers in the state.

## Value of Wood-Related Shipments

Kentucky's forest industries annually ship products worth \$6.4 billion. \$2.2 billion resulted from shipments of wood and furniture products and \$4.2 billion was from paper goods. \$2.9 billion was value-added by companies processing raw wood or less-finished material into more specialized products.



## Sawtimber and Lumber

More than 95 percent of the 1.1 billion board feet of sawtimber harvested annually in Kentucky comes from nonindustrial private landowners. The growing and processing of this privately grown timber is one of the largest agriculture and natural resource industries in Kentucky, and the commonwealth ranks as one of the top three hardwood lumber producing states in the United States.

## Return to Landowner

Approximately \$153 million worth of trees (standing timber) are typically purchased from nonindustrial private forest owners annually.

## Waste Reduction

The percentage of unutilized waste residues from sawmilling and other forest industries continues to decline. Currently, only 5 percent of the wood residue is not used, a dramatic decrease from 35 percent in the mid-1970s. This has been due to the use of more efficient machinery and the aggressive pursuit of the sale of sawdust and bark residues for mulch, fuel, composite wood products, charcoal, animal bedding, and other useful products.

## Renewability

Kentucky continues to increase the total volume of present and future timber trees (growing stock) despite a loss of forest acreage. Kentucky's forests are renewable, increasing the total growing stock by

approximately 1 percent per year. Large sawtimber growing stock has increased by approximately 2 percent per year. Increases in growing stock outpace removals as indicated by a net gain of growing stock every year since 1988.

## Important Commercial Species

Deciduous (hardwood) trees are far more commercially important than coniferous (softwood) trees. The majority of our mature forests are populated by oaks (*Quercus spp.*) including both white and red. However, yellow-poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) also known as tulip-poplar or tuliptree, is also an extremely important timber species that is harvested and processed in similar amounts to white oak, our most important commercial oak species. Other important species are hard maple (*Acer saccharum* and *Acer nigrum*) and ash (*Fraxinus spp.*). Softwoods account for less than 10 percent of the volume of timber processed in the state.

## State Tree

Yellow-poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) is the state tree of Kentucky. Yellow-poplar replaced the Kentucky coffeetree as the state tree in 1994 because of its abundance and commercial importance to the state. Kentucky coffeetree is now the state heritage tree.

## Wildlife

Kentucky's forests provide critical habitat for many game and nongame wildlife species, including deer, turkey, elk, and black bears. It is estimated that \$545 million is spent annually on fishing, \$373 million on hunting, and \$602 million on wildlife watching.



## Logging

The Kentucky Forest Conservation Act requires the presence of a trained Kentucky Master Logger on commercial logging operations. Loggers are required to use Best management Practices (BMPs) to protect water quality and the Kentucky Division of Forestry inspects logging sites to ensure proper use of BMPs. The Kentucky Master Logger Program has graduated approximately 6,000 loggers since its inception in 1992.

## Nontimber Forest Products

While the majority of forest revenue is generated from timber, many woodland owners—particularly those with smaller acreages—have more potential for growing and harvesting nontimber forest products than timber. Nontimber forest options include medicinal plants (ginseng being the most valuable with annual harvests of several million dollars), bee products, native and exotic mushrooms such as shiitake, maple syrup, crafts materials, fence posts, and fuelwood.

## Public Benefits from Private Forests

Private forest owners, who own approximately 78 percent of Kentucky's timber-

land, provide significant benefits to all Kentuckians. Clean water, wildlife habitats that maintain game and nongame species, recreational opportunities, and aesthetic beauty are but a few of the extremely valuable ecosystem services that Kentucky's woodland owners provide, free of charge, to the commonwealth.

## Sources

- 2002 Census of Agriculture
- USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station, Forest Inventory and Analysis ([www.srsfia2.fs.fed.us](http://www.srsfia2.fs.fed.us))
- US Census Bureau 2000
- Kentucky Directory of Business & Industry
- Directories of the Primary and Secondary Wood Industries
- 2002 Economic Census of Manufacturing for Kentucky
- U.S. Department of Commerce; Bureau of the Census
- 2003 Annual Survey of Manufactures, Geographic Area Series
- 2003 County Business Patterns Report for NAICS 321113
- Kentucky's Timber Industry—An Assessment of Timber Product Output and Use, 2001
- 2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation in Kentucky.