

HARDWOODS ARE NOW BEING HARVESTED AT RECORD LEVELS

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Abstract: Recent canvasses by the USDA Forest Service of the sawmills and pulpmills in the central hardwood region show large increases in the harvests of hardwood species. In Kentucky, the production of hardwood sawlogs rose from 457 million board feet in 1974 to 775 million board feet in 1986, a 70 percent increase. In West Virginia, hardwood sawlog production also increased. In 1987, hardwood sawlog production in the Mountaineer State totaled 566 million board feet, an increase of 39 percent over the 399 million board feet produced in 1979.

A variety of species make up the sawlog harvests in these two states. In West Virginia, northern red oak lead all other species with 129 million board feet cut for sawlogs followed by yellow-poplar with 113 million board feet. In Kentucky, yellow-poplar was the top species harvested with 109 million board feet; white oak was a close second with 108 million board feet. As a group, the oak species represented 52 percent of all hardwoods harvested for sawlogs in these states.

The harvest of hardwoods for pulpwood also has increased in these states. In 1988, 413,000 cords of hardwood pulpwood were harvested in Kentucky and West Virginia versus 171,000 cords harvested in 1978.

Increased activity at sawmills in Kentucky and West Virginia has made available more residue chips for pulpmills to use for furnish. Between 1978 and 1988, the use of hardwood residue chips for pulpwood more than doubled, from 338,900 cord equivalents to 757,500 cord equivalents in these two states.

Timber inventories in these states have been building over many years. The ratio of timber growth to removals is 3.7 to 1 in West Virginia and 2.1 to 1 in Kentucky. Because of these favorable ratios and the large inventories currently available for cutting, it is likely that forest industry will continue to expand in these states to take advantage of existing opportunities.

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