

Forest Land Ownership in the Conterminous United States

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Software

ArcGIS Desktop 9.1 and ArcGIS Spatial Analyst

Data Source(s)

USFS, USGS, CBI, EPA, ESRI

Patterns of public and private forestland ownership vary across the United States. For example, two-thirds of western forestland is publicly owned, mostly by federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service. However, more than 80 percent of eastern forestland is privately owned. Private forestland is further differentiated by industrial ownership classes. Private industrial forest is land owned by a company or corporation that operates a primary wood-using plant, such as a sawmill or paper mill. The heaviest concentrations of private industrial forestland are in the Northeast, South, and Pacific Northwest.

The pie charts were designed such that the colors correspond to the map categories. Public ownership appears in blue, while private forest is differentiated by industrial (red) versus non-industrial (yellow) ownership. The charts summarize the percentage of forestland by ownership category. The size (area) of each pie chart is proportional to the total forest area in each region. Comparing these charts, it becomes apparent how drastic the difference in public versus private ownership is from east to west.

The percentage of private industrial forestland was estimated from Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) data, derived primarily from the USFS Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program. The data was summarized over a hexagon sampling array developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Monitoring and Analysis Program (EMAP). The forestland spatial pattern was derived from the U.S. Geological Survey National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD) and was classified as public or private ownership according to the Protected Areas Database of the Conservation Biology Institute. Each forestland pixel classified as private was then attributed with the percentage industrial ownership value associated with the EMAP hexagon in which the pixel was located. Political boundaries were derived from ESRI Data & Maps.

Courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service.

