Building with Wood Helps Keep Forests as Forest

America’s forests provide us with multiple benefits—clean air and water, wildlife habitat, places to hike, fish and hunt, wood products we use every day, and good paying jobs in rural communities. And it’s families, not the federal government and not private industry, that are the largest forest ownership group in America. Owning more than 284 million acres, these 22 million Americans will have a significant impact on the health and productivity of our forests. For many of these families, having markets to sell their wood means the difference between holding on to their land and selling it. With income from selling their wood, forest owners can reinvest resources back into their land—keeping it as forest. Strong markets for wood products are an essential ingredient to keeping forests, forests. And that’s good for all of us. Healthy forests need healthy markets. And that’s another reason why wood is a better way to build.

- Family forest owners own 35 percent of U.S. forestland—more than the federal government or private industry, and the majority own small parcels of land.\(^1\) Strong wood markets help to ensure these families have income from their land, making it affordable for families to sustain their forestland.

- Private landowners in the U.S. plant about four million trees every day—five trees each year for every man, woman and child in America.\(^2\)

- For the past 100 years, the total forest area in the U.S. has been stable and even grew by two million acres from 2000 to 2005\(^3\), a time when markets were strong.

- The U.S. Forest Service projects a loss of 16-34 million acres of forestland in the U.S. by 2060. The South is expected to have the greatest loss of forest (nine-21 million acres).\(^4\)

- Family woodland owners in the American Tree Farm System\(^5\), the largest and oldest sustainable woodland system in America, internationally recognized and meeting strict third-party certification standards, sustainably manage more than 26 million acres of forestland in America.

- When we had stronger markets, America had more land in forested conditions, according to historical data from the USFS.

American Forest Foundation
www.forestfoundation.org/wood
CASE STUDY

Tree Farmer Dwight Batts is one of the more than 22 million family forest owners across the country. A fifth generation landowner in Wilson County, North Carolina, Batts and his wife Judy manage their diverse property for timber production, water quality, recreation, wildlife and environmental education. A diverse landscape of pines and hardwoods provides a home for several animal and bird species with special areas for pollinators like honey bees.

A true family operation, two of the Batts children and other family members live on the farm and work hard to help keep the forestland healthy and sustainable for future generations. “It all begins by using best management practices in the forest and then working with the outcomes to improve the other aspects.” Over the past few years, the Battses have begun restoring several acres of longleaf pine habitat, improving the health of the forest for wildlife and ensuring they can continue to provide benefits like clean water and air. “This work is paid for by the production of marketable wood products,” Batts says. “Without markets for wood products it would not be possible.”

RESOURCES:

American Tree Farm System: www.treefarmsystem.org

Stem the Loss, a report from the American Forest Foundation:
http://www.forestfoundation.org/stemtheloss

1 USFS Forest Inventory and Analysis data, http://www.fia.fs.fed.us
2 AF&PA, http://www.afandpa.org/
3 Ibid.
4 Future of America’s Forests and Rangelands, USFS 2010 Resources Planning Act Assessment

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