

EAST TEXAS FORESTLANDS, 2012

TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

FOREST INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Texas A&M Forest Service works in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service to inventory forestlands in East Texas. This joint effort is known as Forest Inventory and



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Analysis or FIA. Every year highly-trained foresters and technicians measure plots throughout the region. Data collected are used to estimate acres of forestland, numbers and types of trees, volumes and weights of those trees, and components of change including growth, mortality, and removals. This report presents results for the 2012 inventory, which is based on data from 3,780 plots measured primarily in inventory years 2008 through 2012.

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REGION



HIGHLIGHTS

Resource Attribute	2012	2011	Change
Timberland area (million acres)	11.9	11.9	-0.1%
Number of trees (billions)	7.6	7.7	-1.2%
Volume (billion cubic feet)	17.5	17.5	-0.2%
Biomass (million tons)	439.1	441.1	-0.5%
Net growth (million cubic feet per year)	699.5	750.0	-6.7%
Removals (million cubic feet per year)	622.5	639.7	-2.7%
Mortality (million cubic feet per year)	285.5	260.6	+9.6%

Estimates for 2011 are recompiled from the latest database and may differ slightly from estimates in last year's report. Estimates are based on a sample. Sampling errors for the 2012 estimates presented in the table are: timberland area 0.9%, number of trees 2.0%, volume 2.1%, biomass 1.8%, net growth 3.6%, removals 5.7%, and mortality 6.2%.

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Forestland is defined as land with at least 10 percent cover (or equivalent stocking) by live trees of any size, including land that formerly had such tree cover and that will be naturally or artificially regenerated.

Timber Investment Management Organizations (TIMOs) buy, manage, and sell timberland on behalf of insurance companies, foundations, pension funds, and other institutional investors.

Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) buy, manage, and sell real estate on behalf of private investors.

TIMBERLAND

East Texas is a region that includes the 43 counties depicted in Figure 1. The region encompasses 22.4 million acres of total area. Timberland is forestland (see sidebar) that is not withdrawn by law(s) prohibiting the management for production of wood products and that is capable of growing at least 20 cubic feet per acre per year. There is an estimated 11.9 million acres of timberland, which is 53 percent of the total area in the region.

The density of timberland (as a percentage of total area) by county is displayed in Figure 1. Timberland density ranges from 6 percent to 91 percent. The highest densities are observed in the south central and southeast counties. The lowest densities are observed in counties nearest the Gulf.

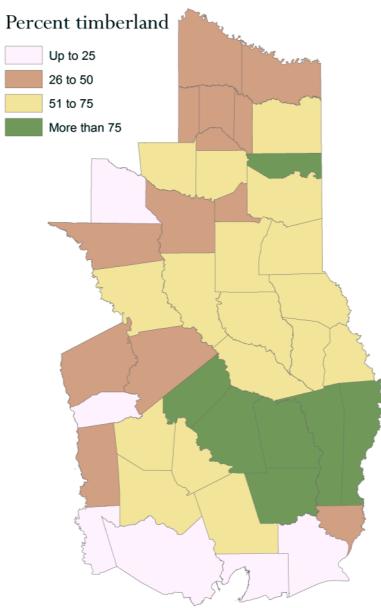


Figure 1. Density of timberland by county.

OWNERSHIP

In East Texas slightly less than 92 percent of the timberland is privately-owned (Figure 2). Family forest landowners are by far the largest group of private owners, accounting for about 54 percent of all timberland. In the past decade timberland held by corporations that own wood-processing facilities (i.e. vertically integrated forest products companies) has transferred to corporations that do not own wood processing facilities (i.e. TIMOs and REITs). TIMOs and REITs currently account for about 25 percent of timberland. Other private ownership classes (i.e. nonindustrial corporate excluding TIMOs and REITs, unincorporated, Native American, and nongovernmental organizations) account for about 13 percent of all timberland.

Slightly more than 8 percent of timberland is publicly owned (Figure 2).

There is an estimated 644 thousand acres owned by U.S. Forest Service, accounting for 64 percent of all public timberland. The State of Texas and the Department of Defense/

Energy account for an estimated 126 and 145 thousand acres, respectively.

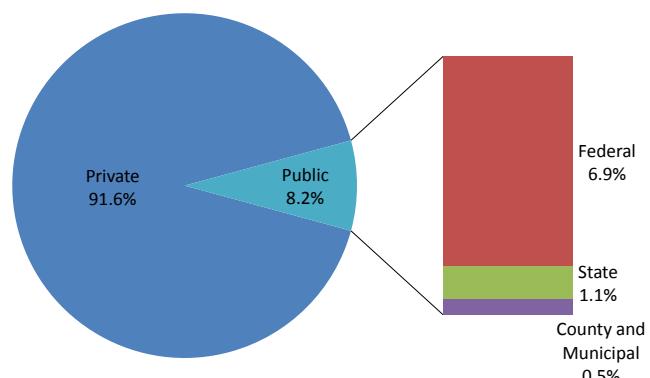


Figure 2. Distribution of timberland by ownership group.

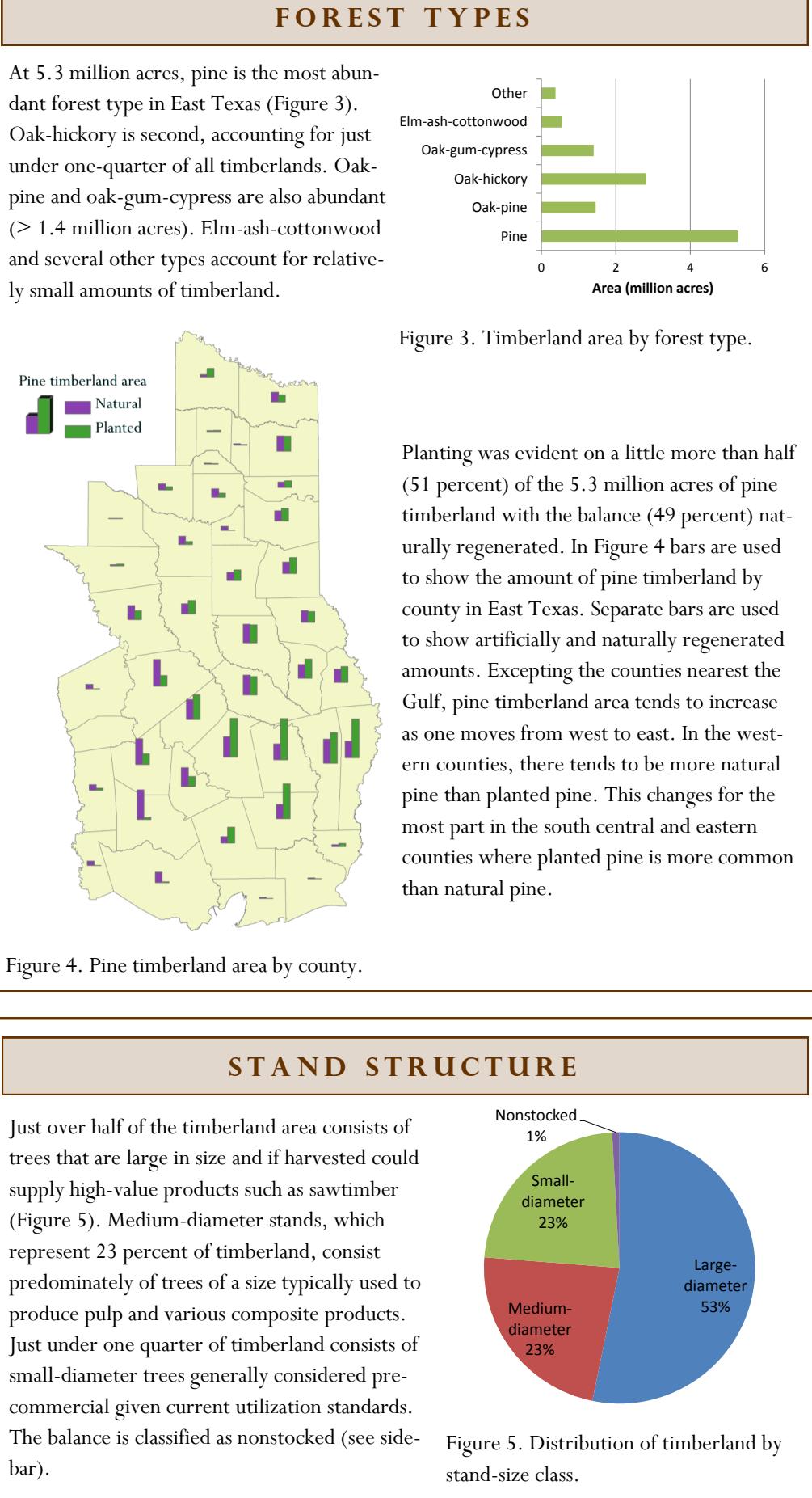
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Softwood species are trees with needle-, scale-, or awl-like leaves. Most, but not all, stay green all year.

The most common softwood tree in East Texas is loblolly pine.

Stand structure refers to the horizontal and vertical distribution of plants in a stand.

Nonstocked is a category that includes forestlands that for any number of reasons few trees were sampled (e.g., the period immediately after harvesting or natural disturbance but before regeneration).



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Volume reported here is net cubic foot volume from a 1-foot high stump to a minimum 4-inch top diameter outside bark in live trees with a minimum diameter of 5 inches.

For reporting purposes, trees are grouped into diameter classes. The number is the midpoint of the diameter class. For example, the 12-inch class includes trees 11.0 to 12.9 inches in diameter.

Average net volume per acre of timberland is 1,468 cubic feet per acre.

VOLUME

There is an estimated 17.5 billion cubic feet of volume on timberland in East Texas. Softwood species account for 57 percent and hardwoods account for 43 percent of the total.

The distribution of volume by major species group and tree diameter class (see sidebar for explanation) is displayed in Figure 6. For softwoods, volume levels increase quickly and peak in the 10-inch diameter class and then decrease as diameter increases. Hardwood volume levels increase and hit a plateau in the 10-inch diameter classes and then gradually drop as diameter increases. Softwood volumes exceed hardwood volumes, excepting for some of the largest diameter classes. Softwood volumes rise well above hardwood volumes in the 8- to 22-inch diameter classes.

In Figure 7 bars are used to show volume on timberland in East Texas counties. Separate bars are used for softwoods and hardwoods. Softwood volumes are highest in the south central and southeastern counties. In many of these counties softwood volumes greatly exceed hardwood volumes. In 20 of 43 counties hardwood volume exceeds softwood volume. These counties are, for the most part, in the northern and western areas of the region.

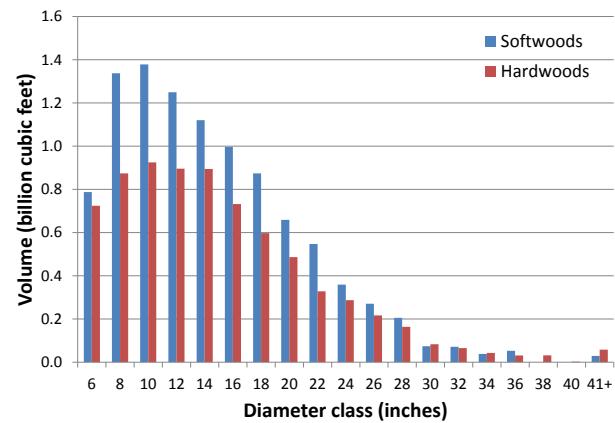


Figure 6. Distribution of volume on timberland by species group and diameter class.

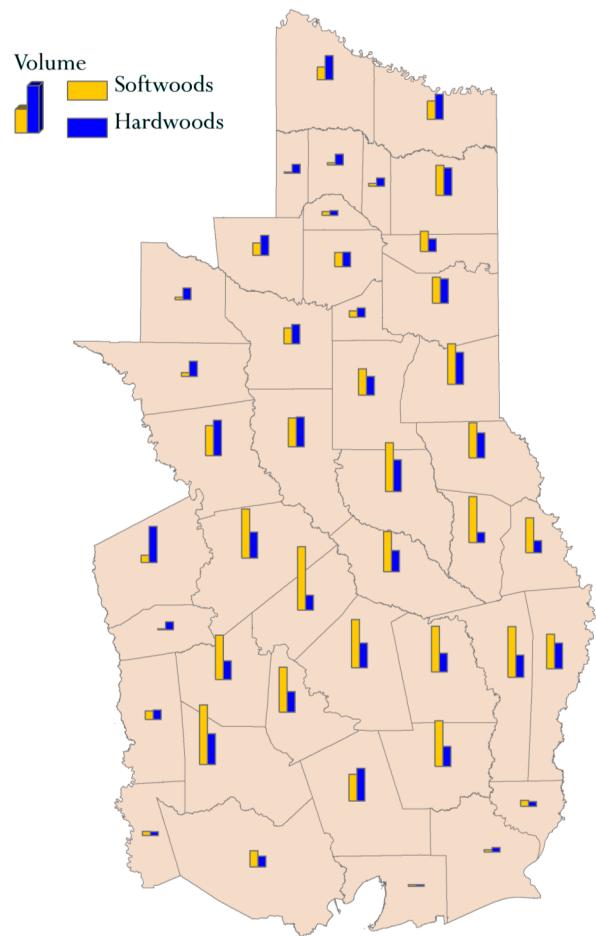


Figure 7. Net cubic foot volume on timberland by species group and county.

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Biomass reported here is aboveground oven-dry weight of live trees with a diameter of at least 1 inch.

Hardwood species are trees that have broad leaves. Many, but not all, drop their leaves in the fall.

The most common hardwood tree in East Texas is sweetgum.

There is an average of 37 tons per acre of biomass on timberland in East Texas.

BIO MASS

There is an estimated 439.1 million tons of biomass on timberland in East Texas. Hardwood species account for 51 percent and softwood species 49 percent of the total.

Biomass by diameter class

and major species group is displayed in Figure 8. Biomass levels for hardwood and softwood species increase as diameter increases up to the 10-inch diameter class and then declines as diameter increases.

There is considerably more hardwood biomass than softwood biomass in the smallest diameter classes.

Softwood biomass exceeds hardwood biomass in the 8-inch, 10-inch, and 12-inch classes. Biomass for the two species groups track one another closely in several of the intermediate and large diameter classes. Hardwood biomass outpaces softwood biomass in the largest diameter classes.

Biomass per acre of timberland is displayed in Figure 9. Values range between 24 and 52 tons per acre. Three of the five counties with highest values are grouped together in the southwestern section of the region (Montgomery, San Jacinto, and Trinity Counties).

Small diameter trees (2- and 4-inch diameter classes) from pre-commercial thinnings and commercial harvests are a potential source of material for facilities producing energy from biomass.

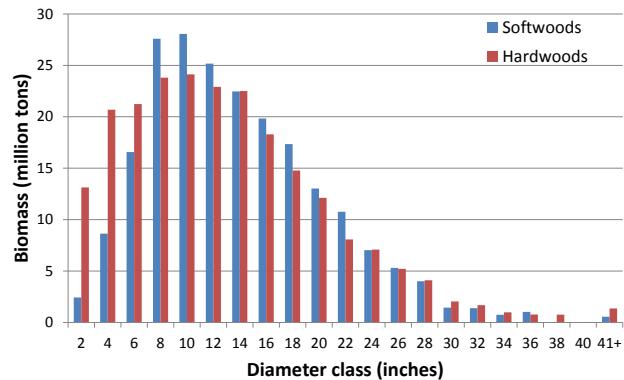


Figure 8. Distribution of biomass on timberland by species group and diameter class.

Tons per acre

- Up to 30
- 31 to 35
- 36 to 40
- 41 to 45
- 46 and higher

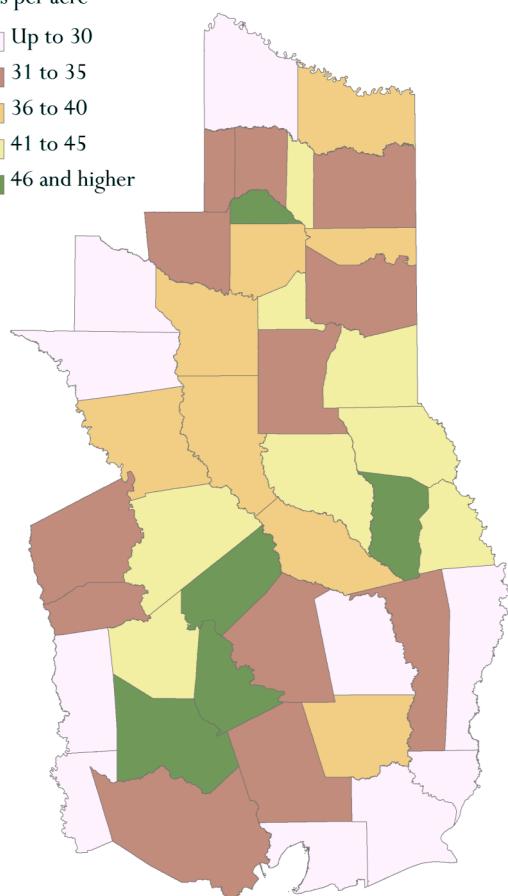


Figure 9. Biomass per acre of timberland by county.

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Net growth is gross growth minus mortality.

Values of net growth and removals are annual averages over the measurement period, which is approximately five years for most plots. For example, a plot measured in 2010 was likely previously measured in 2005 and the change observed on that plot is the change that occurred during that time period.

Data by forest type and county/region are reported in the appendix.

Estimates are based on a sample and are therefore subject to sampling error.

FIA Data is online at
<http://www.fia.fs.fed.us/tools-data/>

GROWTH AND REMOVALS

Average annual net growth (see sidebar for an explanation) of live trees on timberland is estimated at 699.5 million cubic feet throughout East Texas. Softwoods account for 86 percent of net growth and hardwoods 14 percent. Average annual removals of live trees on timberland is estimated at 622.5 million cubic feet. Softwoods account for 75 percent of removals and hardwoods 25 percent.

One approach to measuring sustainability is to compare net growth to removals. If net growth exceeds removals, then inventory levels would be expected to increase. If net growth is less than removals, then inventory levels would be expected to decrease. Overall, net growth exceeds removals by 76.9 million cubic feet per year and inventory levels are expected to increase.

Net growth and removals by species group are displayed in Figure 10. Net growth exceeds removals for softwoods, suggesting inventory levels will increase. Removals exceed net growth for hardwoods, suggesting inventory levels will decline as long as this condition persists.

Average annual mortality of hardwoods has increased steadily since 2006 (Figure 11). Inventory foresters have noted weather (i.e., hurricanes) as a primary factor. Higher levels of mortality are contributing to reduced net growth in hardwoods.

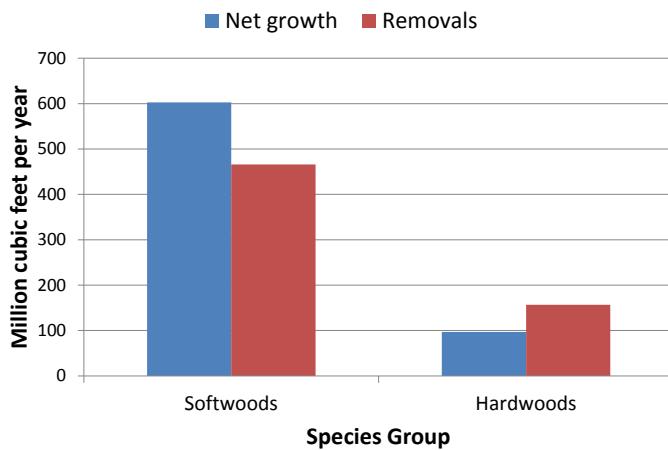


Figure 10. Net growth and removals of all live on timberland by species group.

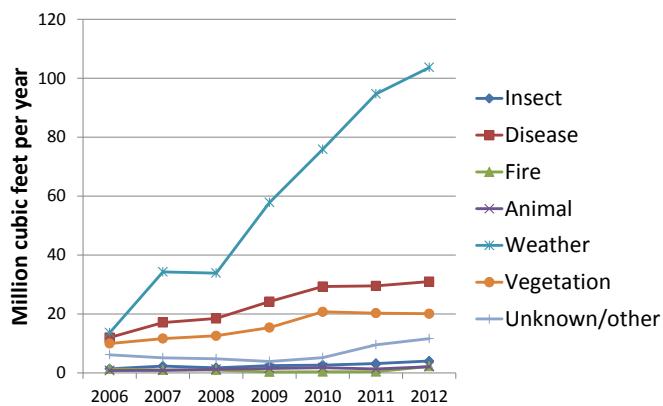


Figure 11. Hardwood mortality by cause of death, 2006–2012.

MORE INFORMATION

This report was prepared by Chris Edgar and Rebekah Zehnder of Texas A&M Forest Service. Feel free to contact us with questions about information in this report or about Forest Inventory and Analysis. We may be reached by phone at 979/458-6630 or by e-mail at cedgar@tfs.tamu.edu and rzehnder@tfs.tamu.edu.