



Forest Lands - Maintenance of Productive Capacity of Forest Ecosystems

Indicator # 8501

Note: This indicator includes three components and corresponds to Montreal Process Criterion 2, Indicators 10, 11, and 13.

Indicator #8501 Components:

- Component (1) – Area of forest land and area of forest land available for timber production
- Component (2) – Total merchantable volume of growing stock on forest lands available for timber production
- Component (3) – Annual removal of wood products compared to net growth, or the volume determined to be sustainable
(proposed for future analysis; data not presented in this report)

Overall Assessment

Status: **Not Assessed**
 Trend: **Undetermined**
 Rationale: **Additional discussion amongst forestry experts is needed for an assessment determination.**

Lake-by-Lake Assessment

Each lake was categorized with a Not Assessed status and an Undetermined trend, since data by individual lake basin were not available for the U.S. at this time.

Purpose

- To determine the capacity of Great Lakes forests to produce wood products
- To allow for future assessments of changes in productivity over time, which can be representative of social and economic trends affecting management decisions and can also be related to ecosystem health

Ecosystem Objective

To maximize the productive capacity of Great Lakes forests while maintaining the health and sustainability of the ecosystem

State of the Ecosystem

Component (1): Area of forest land and area of forest land available for timber production

The total area of forest land analyzed in the Great Lakes basin for this report was 35,113,242 hectares (86 million acres). Of this area, about 89% (or a total of 31,194,790 hectares (77 million acres)) can be considered as available for timber production, as calculated from U.S. timber land estimates and Canadian productive forests not restricted from harvesting. In the U.S. portion of the basin, the proportion of land available for timber production was about 91%, while 86% of the entire Canadian forested portion of the basin was available. For just the managed portion of Ontario's forests, 91% was available for timber production. Complete U.S. data broken down by state and Canadian data broken down by lake basin can be viewed in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

The amount of forest land available for timber production is directly related to the productive capacity of forests for harvestable goods. This proportion is affected by different types of management activities, which provides an indication of the balance between the need for wood products with the need to satisfy assorted environmental concerns aimed at conservation of biological diversity.

State	Total Area of Forest land (ha)	Area of Forest Land Available for Timber Production* (ha)	% Available for Timber Production*
Illinois	29,322	5,634	19.21%
Indiana	198,351	182,287	91.90%
Michigan	7,802,663	7,533,587	96.55%
Minnesota	3,345,320	2,818,676	84.26%
New York	4,775,982	3,928,686	82.26%
Ohio	742,161	668,190	90.03%
Pennsylvania	223,904	210,992	94.23%
Wisconsin	3,086,921	3,033,084	98.26%
Total	20,204,626	18,381,137	90.97%

Table 1. Area of forest land available for timber production* in relationship to total area of forest land in U.S. Great Lakes basin counties.

* Area designated as timber land is used as a proxy for this value and may include inaccessible areas. The presented data should therefore be considered an over-estimation of the net area available for timber production.

Source: USDA Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis National Program, 2002 Resource Planning Act (RPA) Assessment Database

Component (2): Total merchantable volume of growing stock on forest lands available for timber production

In the analyzed area of Great Lakes basin forests that were available for timber production, 78% of the total wood volume was merchantable. This percentage of growing stock included 92% for the U.S. portion of the basin and 61% for Ontario's managed forests in the Canadian part of the basin. Complete U.S. data broken down by state and Canadian data broken down by lake basin can be viewed in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

If the values of net merchantable volume are compared to the total area of forest land available for timber production, a rough estimate of the forests' productive capacity can be obtained. Calculations show the per-unit-area productivity of U.S. Great Lakes forests at 92.7 m³/ha and of Canadian Great Lakes forests at 90.2 m³/ha.

Changes in productivity values can be indicative of the ecosystem's health and vigor, as a lowered ratio of merchantable volume to available timber land can suggest reduced growth and ability of trees to absorb nutrients, water and solar energy and increased disease and tree mortality. Further assessment of productive capacity would require additional historical data and analysis by forestry experts.

Component (3): Annual removal of wood products compared to net growth, or the volume determined to be sustainable

The growth to removal ratio is often used as a course surrogate for the concept of sustainable production in the U.S. Although exact data for this measure have not been compiled for this report, nationwide U.S. studies have shown that timber growth has exceeded removals for several decades, and Ontario's wood removals on managed timber land is supposedly done within sustainable limits by definition of the forestry practices enacted in those areas.

Pressures

Fluctuating marketplace demands for wood products and increased pressures to reserve forest lands for recreation, conservation of biodiversity and wildlife habitat can affect the volume of timber available for harvest.

Disease and disturbance from fires or other events can also affect productivity capacity.

Management Implications

Timber productivity can be increased through the use of timber plantations and sustainable management of forests available for timber production.

Continued discussion of the meaning of sustainability and how it is affected by wood product removal is crucial to the effectiveness of future management decisions.

A) Canadian Great Lakes Basin			
Lake Basin	Total Area of Forest Land (ha)	Net area of Forest Land Available for Timber Production (ha)	% Available for Timber Production
Superior	7,061,238	6,006,356	85.06%
Huron	6,162,419	5,343,401	86.71%
Erie	322,317	291,107	90.32%
Ontario	1,362,643	1,172,788	86.07%
Totals	14,908,617	12,813,653	85.95%

B) AOU* Portion of Ontario			
Lake Basin	Total Area of AOU's Forest Land (ha)	Net area of AOU Forest Land Available for Timber Production (ha)	% Available for Timber Production
Huron	4,710,406	4,227,743	89.75%
Ontario	665,100	611,268	91.91%
Superior	6,227,943	5,749,905	92.32%
Totals	11,603,450	10,588,917	91.26%

Table 2. Area of forest land available for timber production in relationship to total area of forest land in, A) Canadian Great Lakes basin, and B) the AOU* portion of Ontario.

* The Area of the Undertaking (AOU) land area represents 72% of Ontario's total Great Lakes basin land area and 78% of its total forest area.

Source: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Forest Standards and Evaluation Section

State	Total Live Volume* (m ³) on Forest Lands Available for Timber Production	Net Merchantable Volume (m ³) of Timber Products (Growing Stock*)	Volume (m ³) of Non-merchantable Timber Products	% Growing Stock* (of Total Vol. Available for Timber Production)
Illinois	518,577	500,423	18,154	96.50%
Indiana	22,162,859	18,342,594	3,820,265	82.76%
Michigan	829,796,679	754,964,965	74,826,151	90.98%
Minnesota	219,781,880	199,559,859	20,222,021	90.80%
New York	383,181,677	365,098,413	18,083,264	95.28%
Ohio	73,836,032	71,466,897	2,369,136	96.79%
Pennsylvania	25,840,363	24,880,573	959,790	96.29%
Wisconsin	294,891,458	269,125,981	25,765,478	91.26%
Total	1,850,009,525	1,703,939,705	146,064,258	92.10%

Table 3. Total volume of growing stock* in U.S. Great Lakes basin counties.

* Calculations do not take inaccessibility or inoperability of timber land into account, so resulting values are skewed high

Source: USDA Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis National Program, 2002 Resource Planning Act (RPA) Assessment Database

Comments from the author(s)

It can be difficult to analyze forest areas and growing stocks for a set moment in time, because inventory time frames can vary. U.S. 2002 Resource Planning Act (RPA) data are compiled from a range of different years (1989 through 1998 for Great Lakes states) depending on when the most recent state inventories were conducted. This issue should diminish as the U.S. Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis Program (FIA) switches to an annualized survey cycle, and future analyses should therefore incorporate these data.

Lake Basin	Total Volume (m ³) on Forest Lands Available for Timber Production	Net Merchantable Volume (m ³) of Timber Products (Growing Stock)	Volume (m ³) of Non-merchantable Timber Products	% Growing Stock (of Total Vol. Available for Timber Production)
Huron	667,854,390	421,077,634	246,776,756	63.05%
Ontario	114,963,698	72,717,983	42,245,715	63.25%
Superior	787,640,995	461,410,679	326,230,315	58.58%
Totals	1,570,459,083	955,206,296	615,252,787	60.82%

Table 4. Total volume of growing stock in Canadian Great Lakes basin*.

* Data only available for Ontario's managed forests (AOU portion of Ontario)

Source: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Forest Standards and Evaluation Section

Although Canadian data are available by watershed, U.S. forest data are compiled by county for this report, so the area of U.S. land analyzed is not necessarily completely within the Great Lakes basin. Corresponding data may be skewed. This factor makes it difficult to represent the data by individual lake basin. Additional GIS analysis of the U.S. raw inventory data would be required to provide forest data by watershed.

Area of timber land in the U.S. is used as a proxy for the net area of land available for timber production in U.S. data calculations, but timber land area may include currently inaccessible and inoperable areas or areas where landowners do not have timber production as an ownership objective, and is therefore an overestimation of the net area available for timber production and associated merchantable wood volumes.

Canadian data for growing stock are only available for Ontario's managed forests where Forest Resources Planning Inventories occur. This area is commonly referred to as the Area of the Undertaking (AOU), and only represents 72% of Ontario's total Great Lakes basin land area and 78% of its total forest area. Analysis of the rest of the Canadian part of the basin is restricted to satellite data capabilities.

Data for annual removal of wood products as compared to net growth are available for Canada and a few of the U.S. Great Lakes states, but were not prepared for the Great Lakes basin at the time of this report. This information should be compiled for future analyses when available, and is an important ratio to monitor over time to ensure that wood harvesting is not reducing the total volume of trees on timber land at larger spatial scales. Unfortunately, this value does not add much insight to the detailed ecological attributes of sustainability, and must be analyzed with additional biological components to achieve this indicator's ecosystem objective.

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Authors:

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Constance Carpenter, Sustainable Forests Coordinator, USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry
 Larry Watkins, Forest Analyst, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Forest Evaluations and Standards Section, Forest Management Branch

Eric Wharton, USDA Forest Service

T. Bently Wigley, NCASI

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Additional Contributors:

Mike Gardner, Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, Northland College; Dain Maddox, USDA Forest Service; Ann McCammon Soltis, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission; Wil McWilliams, USDA Forest Service; Bill Meades, Canadian Forest Service; Greg Nowacki, USDA Forest Service; Teague Prichard, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; Karen Rodriguez, U.S. EPA, GLNPO; Steve Schlobohm, USDA Forest Service; and Chris Walsh, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

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