



# The Northeast's Changing Forest (Harvard University Forest)

*Lloyd C. Irland*

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*The Northeast's Changing Forest* reviews the history and conditions of the forest in the nine northeastern states. This diverse region stretches from the shores of Lake Erie to Passamaquoddy Bay and from Cape May, New Jersey to northern Maine. The forests range from the dune forest of the New Jersey beaches to subalpine forests in the White Mountains and the Adirondacks. Heavily cleared for agriculture in the nineteenth century, the region's forests have increased in area since 1909 by an amount equal to the entire forest area of Maine, which is 17 million acres.

The region's forests can be thought of as five "forests," each playing a distinct economic role. In the *Industrial Forest*, the growing and harvesting of industrial wood is the primary use, accompanied by substantial use for hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and wilderness canoeing. In the *Suburban Forest*, the general emphasis on "green backdrop" roles belies the importance of casual recreation, firewood cutting, and industrial wood uses. In the *Rural Forest* of the region's farming and thinly settled rural areas, traditional forest uses continue. In the *Recreational Forest*, heavily developed areas for skiing, lakeside camps and resorts, and coastal developments set the tone. Finally, in the *Wild Forest*, preservation of nature is dominant.

After generations when few aside from the landowner and technical communities paid the forests much attention, they have now become focal points for policy conflicts. Proposals for large additions to the Adirondack Park's Forever Wild lands, for creating a Maine Woods National Park, and for eliminating all timber harvesting on the region's National Forests are prominent examples. The legislatures of every state in the region deal annually with issues of forest taxation, forest practices regulation, public ownership, and land uses affecting forests. *The Northeast's Changing Forest* gives readers an historic, geographic, and ecological background for understanding the condition of the forests of the Northeast and the outlook for their future.

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