

# 1 SOUTHERN PINE FORESTS

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## THIS FORESTRY PUBLICATION IS ONE OF A SERIES ON SOUTHERN PINE MANAGEMENT.

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Of the 200 million acres of commercial forest land in the 13 southern states, 18 1/2 million acres are publicly owned, 36 1/2 million acres are owned by wood-based industries, and by far the lion's share, 145 million acres, belongs to private individuals and groups. (Figure 1) U.S. Forest Service reports indicate that 94 million acres of southern forest land support, in whole or in part, commercial quantities of at least one of the four major southern pine species.

## COMMERCIAL FOREST OWNERSHIP (SOUTH)

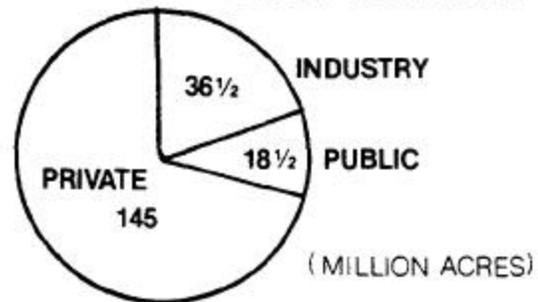


Figure 1

The history of these vast pine forests has been tied closely to the development of the region since the days of the earliest settlers. To the first settlers, these forests were both a blessing, offering forest products of all kinds for commerce and local use, and a hindrance to be removed for the establishment of agricultural crops. As the south and the nation developed, much of the original pine forest was removed to provide building materials for towns and railroads, factories and ships, and naval stores. Cleared land was planted to cotton, tobacco, rice and other crops. As agricultural uses for these sites declined or expanded, southern pine acreage increased and decreased. Prior to the 1940's and 1950's, most regeneration of new pine stands was by natural seeding on old fields following agricultural abandonment. Since the 1950's however, a larger and larger portion of new stand establishment has been through artificial regeneration by seeding or planting. Today, there is a place for both natural and artificial regeneration of pine.

Demand for southern pine timber has increased dramatically over the past 40 years, and all projections are that this demand will continue to increase. Several factors, some related and others unrelated, are responsible for this demand. Among the most important factors are the rapid growth of southern pine throughout its range, the reduction of timber removals in the northwest, the establishment of a large pulp and paper industry in the southeast, acceptance of southern pine building materials, and the favorable transportation rates for southern products to eastern markets and to major wood-importing countries throughout the world. These, plus other factors lead to estimates that demand for southern pine timber will double in the next half century.

If this increased demand for southern pine is to be met, what are the implications for owners of land supporting or capable of supporting southern pines? It is apparent from the ownership figures that the largest share of any increased production will come from the non-industrial private landowners. These owners control three-quarters of the land in the south capable of producing southern pine timber. While some increased production will come from industrial lands, total removals from these will provide only a fraction of the needs. Forests owned by governmental agencies provide several services and cannot be expected to satisfy demand for timber. The timber of non-industrial landowners will be in high demand and this demand should be reflected in increased stumpage prices and higher returns to the landowner.

Meeting an increased demand in volume during the first quarter of the next century requires that stands from which this volume is to be taken must be established in the 1980's and early 1990's. Recent surveys in all southern states, conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, show that sufficient seedlings and small trees (2 to 4 inches in diameter) are not now established to meet anticipated needs, and local timber shortages will develop after the turn of the century (Figure 2). This trend can be turned around during the first quarter of the new century if hardwoods on pine sites are controlled and sufficient southern pine establishment is accomplished during the 1980's.

Historically, investment in timber has been a profitable undertaking, with growth in value of timber leading inflation rates by several percentage points (Figure 3). The relative value of timber will increase even more as the demand for southern pine timber increases over the next several decades. Investments in timber production will be a profitable venture for non-industrial landowners in the south. Consequently, they should seriously consider managing their forests more intensively especially to promote the growth and harvest of the four major commercial species of southern pine - loblolly, slash, shortleaf, and longleaf.

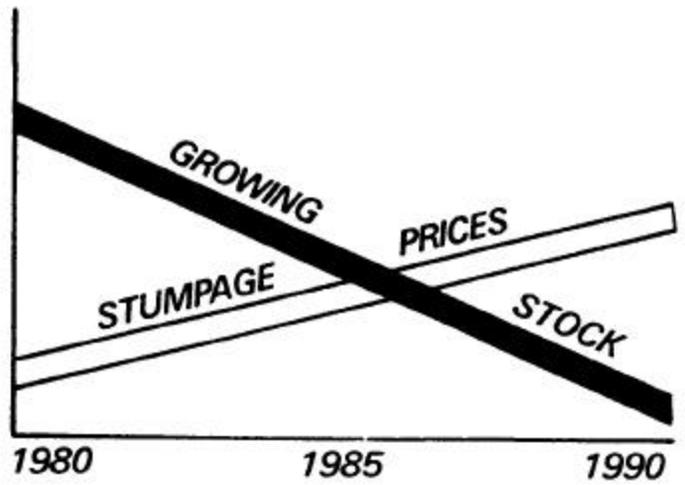


Figure 2

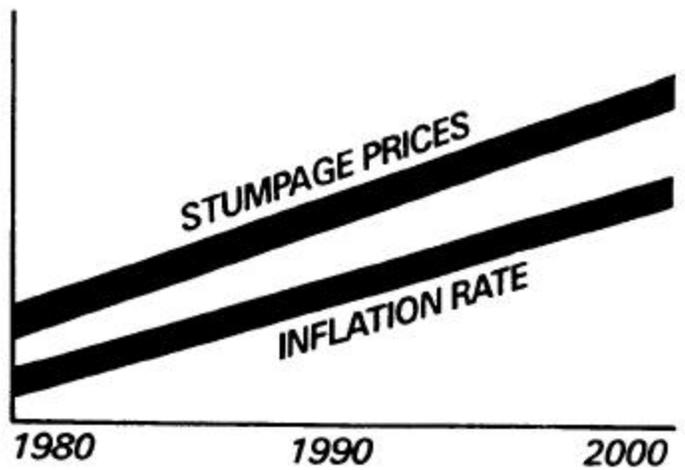


Figure 3

These publications developed jointly by:  
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