

Criteria and Indicators of Sustainability

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry



Description: The Northeastern Area and the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters will track changes in 18 basic indicators of sustainable forest management. These indicators provide credible, unbiased information on forest conditions and management for use in strategic and program planning activities at the state and regional levels. They also provide an important pathway for the flow of sustainability information from state to regional and national levels because they address the seven sustainability criteria used at the national level. (i.e. forest biodiversity, productive capacity, health, global carbon cycling, soil and water quality, multiple benefits, and the legal, institutional, and economic framework available to conduct sustainable forest management). This work is being undertaken through the USDA Forest Service Cooperative State Forest Resource Planning Program in partnership with the Northeast Forest Resource Planners Association.

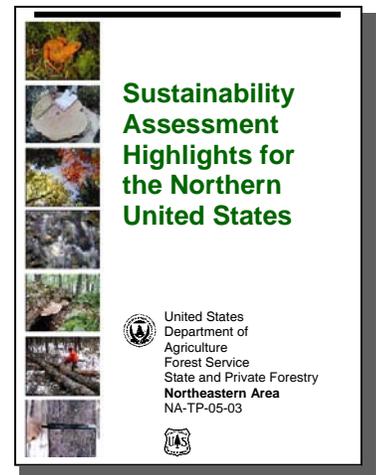
Key Issues:

The criteria and indicators initiative provides the following:

- A demonstration of the Northeastern Area and the State forestry agencies commitment to implement sustainable forestry on State and private forestland.
- An available source of information on the status of forest health and the effects of forest use and management for natural resource professionals, individuals, and groups making decisions affecting forest resources and their quality of life.

2003 Accomplishments:

- The Northeastern Area published the “Sustainability Assessment Highlights for the Northern United States”. This publication provides a snapshot of today’s forests and a baseline for tracking future trends. The report covers the 20 state region from Maine to Minnesota, south to Missouri, and east to Maryland.
- The Northeastern Area is an internationally recognized clearinghouse for information on the development and use of indicators of forest sustainability. A key component of this clearinghouse is a Web site (<http://www.na.fs.fed.us/sustainability>), which is readily accessible to stakeholders and provides information on national, regional, and local sustainability assessments, strategic and state forest resource planning, sources of ecological information, and forest certification.



Future Direction:

The Northeastern Area will continue to use the 18 indicators and other measures to monitor progress in sustainability for strategic and program planning. This information will be made available to many other organizations and agencies through a web accessible database. This will free up time and resources ordinarily used to assemble data. Time can then be used to help understand what it means and move more quickly to decisions and action.

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