

# Tree Planting in the United States--- 1998

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*This annual report summarizes tree planting, timber stand improvement, and nursery production activities across all ownerships of forest land in the United States. It includes State-by-State and ownership breakdowns, regional totals, as well as analysis of trends in the data. It does not include tree planting in urban and community environments. As far as we know, it is the most complete compilation of such data in the country. Because some of the data are estimated, caution must be used in drawing inferences. Tree Planters' Notes 49 (2) 23-36; 1999. Robert Moulton, USDA Forest Service, Forestry Sciences Laboratory, P.O. Box 12254, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709; 919-549-4032; »rmoulton@fs.fed.us«. For nursery information, contact George Hernandez, USDA Forest Service, 1720 Peach Tree Road NW, Atlanta, GA 30367; 404-347-3554; »ghernandez@fs.fed.us«.*

## Tree Planting

### Overview

Tree planting on all ownerships in the United States in fiscal year (FY) 1998 totaled 2,624,681 acres. This is a minor decrease of 11,421 acres (-0.4%) from total tree planting in last year (FY 1997), a pause in planting activity following the 10% increase posted in 1997, as compared with 1996.

As shown in the accompanying table (page 26), tree planting in the United States has been on a rather steady upward track over the long term, rising from about 140 thousand acres in 1930 to the current annual level of 2.6 million acres. Three major peak periods of tree planting activity have occurred over the years, all of which were associated with major Federal programs.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) planted 2.3 million acres of public and private lands to trees from the mid-1930's to the mid-1940's; the Soil Bank Program planted 2.2 million acres of private crop lands to trees from 1956 through 1961; and the Conservation Reserve

### 1998 SUMMARY

- \* Trees were planted on 2,624,681 acres.
- \* Timber stand improvement was completed on 2,398,543 acres.
- \* Nursery production totaled 1,642,089,000 trees.

Program (CRP) has planted trees on 2.8 million acres of highly erodible crop lands, mostly during the late 1980's.

Actually, not one of these major programs was created to plant trees nor to provide other natural resource benefits, per se, but rather to address greater societal needs. The CCC was a Great Depression program that provided employment to thousands of unemployed young men, and both the Soil Bank and CRP were prompted by economic crises in agriculture and the need to take surplus crop land out of production to enhance farmers' incomes and to reduce Federal Government agricultural program costs.

Currently, ever increasing concerns about global climate change could prompt yet another major reforestation program. Because trees and forests play a vital role in regulating the Earth's carbon cycle, Accelerated Tree Planting on Nonindustrial Private Lands was one of the mitigation strategies included in the President's 1993 Climate Change Action Plan, and electric utility companies and others have already launched significant new climate change forestry initiatives, including domestic and overseas tree planting projects.

Several observations can be made regarding 1998 tree planting accomplishments:

- \* This year's planting of over 2.6 million acres is the second largest acreage planted to trees in any year since 1990.

*Summary of tree planting in the United States,  
1930-1998*

Fiscal year	Acres
<b>5-Year Interval</b>	
1930	138,970
1935	292,033
1940	519,051
1945	138,944
1950	497,507
1955	812,588
1960	2,137,460
1965	1,325,063
1970	1,599,819
1975	1,930,468
1980	2,266,956
1985	2,695,423
<b>1-Year Interval</b>	
1986	2,753,176
1987	3,033,159
1988	3,394,478
1989	3,021,948
1990	2,862,207
1991	2,558,025
1992	2,544,862
1993	2,419,691
1994	2,477,479
1995	2,421,861
1996	2,406,700
1997	2,636,102
1998	2,624,681

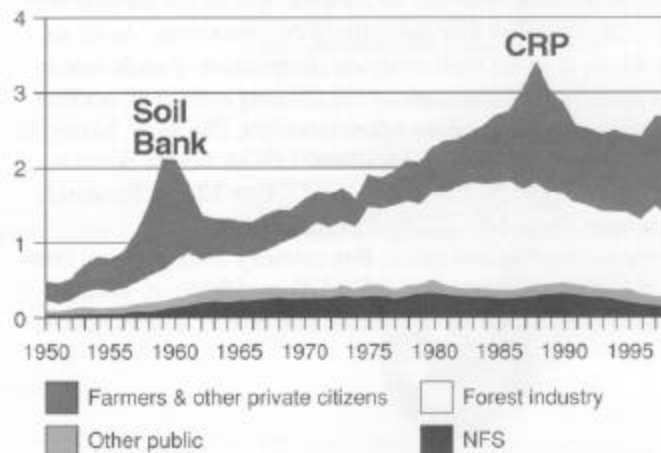
- \* Private landowners did 90% of all tree planting.
  - \* Nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) landowners planted more acres than any other group of owners (48% of the U.S. total) and had their best year since 1989.
  - \* Forest industry planting declined moderately but remained large at 42% of the U.S. total.
  - \* Tree planting on the national forests (6% of the U.S. total) continued its downward trend, falling to its lowest level since 1960.
  - \* More trees are planted each year on State forests than on any other category of State and local government lands.
  - \* The Southern States planted the largest acreage of trees---79% of U.S. total---of any region in the country.
- Georgia was, once again, the top tree planting State.

### Tree Planting by Ownership Group

Private landowners planted 2,353,290 acres of trees in FY 1998, 90% of all tree planting in the United States for the year. These overall figures are similar to those for last year. However, in 1998, nonindustrial private forest land owners increased their rate of planting, while planting declined moderately on forest industry ownerships.

Total tree planting on public ownership was also essentially unchanged from last year, but a notable decrease was reported this year for planting on State and local government ownerships.

### Tree Planting in the United States by Ownership Group (Millions of Acres)



Source: Moulton, Robert J. 1999

**Nonindustrial Private Forest Landowners.** Private landowners with the exception of companies in the forest products industry planted 1,257,973 acres, a 14% increase over last year. This is the highest acreage planted to trees by these owners since 1989, and represents 48% of U.S. total planting this year, up from 42% last year.

In FY 1998, Federal cost share assistance programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture assisted NIPF landowners with the planting of 168,000 acres of trees. An additional 211,000 acres were planted under the CRP and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

The boost provided by the Reserve Programs contributed to the increase in planting on NIPF ownerships this year. In contrast, Federal funding for cost-share programs has declined sharply in recent years. In the early 1990's, the Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) planted about 125,000 acres per year, but this program was eliminated by the 1996 Farm Bill. Annual

funding has been reduced by 50% for Forestry Incentives Program (FIP), and tree planting under this program has declined from 175,000 acres per year to the current level of 82,000 acres. Further, Congress provided no funding for the Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) in fiscal year 1999.

**Forest Industry.** Companies in the forest products industry reported the planting of 1,095,317 acres of trees in FY 1998 (42% of the U.S. total), a decline of 93,045 acres (-8%) from their 1997 accomplishments. This decrease is largely attributable to tree planting in Alabama returning to a normal level following record accomplishments in that State last year, as described in more detail in the State and Regional Highlights of this report.

**National Forests.** Tree planting on National Forest System (NFS) lands administered by the USDA Forest Service totaled 146,887 acres (6% of U.S. total) in FY 1998. The Forest Service leads all other public agencies in annual tree planting accomplishment. However, this year's planting declined by 8% from last year, is less than one-half of acreage planted each year in the late 1980's and early 1990's, and is at its lowest level since 1960.

**Other Public Lands.** Department of the Interior agencies reported 27,996 acres of tree planting in FY 1998, and all other Federal agencies (excluding Agriculture and Interior) planted 13,686 acres.

State and local governments reported the planting of 82,822 acres of trees in fiscal year 1998 (3% of U.S. total), 19% less than were planted in 1997. State forests led this group with 63% of all planting on State and local government lands.

#### *USDA Program Tree Planting in FY 1998 (Thousand Acres)*

FIP	82
SIP	70
Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP)	16
<i>Subtotal Cost-Share Programs</i>	(168)
WRP	45
CRP	166
<i>Subtotal Reserve Programs<sup>1</sup></i>	(211)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>379</b>

<sup>1</sup>The Reserve Programs provide annual rental payments in addition to technical assistance and practice cost sharing.

#### **State and Regional Highlights**

**The Top States.** Eleven States each planted more than 100,000 acres in FY 1998.

Collectively, these States, nine of which are in the South and two in the Pacific Northwest, planted 2.2 million acres, 84% of the U.S. total.

Georgia resumed its traditional place as the leading tree planting State, after being displaced last year by Alabama due to a major effort by forest industry in that State to replant company lands damaged by Hurricane Opal in October 1995. This year, Alabama ranked third, and Mississippi second; both States planted well over 300,000 acres.

Other notable changes from last year include Texas in 5th place--- up from 11th last year; the addition of Virginia to, and the omission of South Carolina from, the Top States list.

#### *States that planted more than 100,000 acres of trees in FY 1998*

Georgia	416,000
Mississippi	371,000
Alabama	310,000
Florida	189,000
Texas	163,000
Oregon	158,000
Louisiana	156,000
Washington	130,000
Arkansas	114,000
North Carolina	106,000
Virginia	101,000

**Regional Notes.** The 13 States in the South (see Definitions) planted 2,065,779 acres of trees in fiscal year 1998, 79% of the U.S. total. The West ranked next with 446,973 acres (17% of the U.S. total). And, the States in the North reported the planting of 111,929 acres (4% of the U.S. total).

#### **Direct Seeding**

The use of seeds to establish trees in the field (planting by direct seeding) was reported on 12,369 acres.

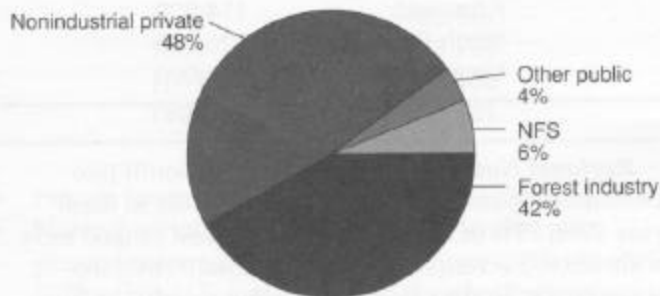
#### **Appendix Tables**

Tree planting acreage for all States by ownership categories are presented in appendix tables 1 through 5.

**Total planting and seeding by ownership category in FY 1998:**

	Acres	Percent of all planting
<b>Federal Government</b>		
National Forests	146,887	5.6
Department of the Interior	27,996	1.1
Other Federal Agencies	13,686	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>188,569</b>	<b>7.2</b>
<b>State and Local Government</b>		
State Forests	51,880	2.0
Other State Lands	11,541	0.4
Local Government	19,401	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>82,822</b>	<b>3.1</b>
<b>Private</b>		
Forest Industry	1,095,317	41.7
Other Industry <sup>1</sup>	(21,748)	(0.8)
Nonindustrial Private	1,257,973	47.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,353,290</b>	<b>89.7</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>2,624,681</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>1</sup>Other Industry: Industries without wood processing facilities are included in entry for Non-industrial Private Owners.



**Total planting and seeding by region in FY 1998:**

	Acres	Percent of all planting
North	111,929	4.3
South	2,065,779	78.7
West	446,973	17.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,624,681</b>	<b>100.0</b>

