

Setting Priorities for California State Forests Vince Taylor, Ph.D.

Timber Industry versus Public Interests in California's Forests

To date, the timber industry has effectively controlled public policy over forests that cover 25 percent of California's land area. The management of these forests is obviously of importance to the timber industry, but how these forests are managed significantly affects the quality of life of most Californians.

The disparity between the timber industry's economic importance and its political power is staggering. **The timber industry accounts for less than one one-thousandth of the state's total economic production.**¹ The timber industry is hardly a blip on the economic landscape. Yet, for as far back as anyone can remember and right to the present day, the timber industry has dominated California forestry policy.

From a public-interest standpoint, a miniscule economic interest should not dominate the governance of California's forests. Californians care strongly about their forests, for legitimate reasons, and their concerns and desires should be uppermost in the minds of those setting forestry policies.

An opportunity for the Advisory Group

The members of the Demonstration State Forest Advisory Group have an opportunity to set priorities for state forests that reflect the overall public interest.

The charter for the group says, "Each member is to represent the public." The priorities set by the group should, therefore, reflect the interests of the public in the management of California's forests.

The state forest advisory group has an opportunity to appropriately balance public and industry concerns. While industry concerns should not be ignored, they ought to be considered in the context of the public's desires for healthy forests and clean streams.

One of the initial tasks assigned the state forest advisory group is to make recommendations about the research and demonstration programs of the state forests. If these programs are to reflect the interests of the public, the primary priority should be to improve understanding of how to restore and maintain healthy ecological processes in our

¹ The ratio of the wholesale value of timber production (\$1.1 billion) in 2001 to the Gross State Product (\$1,359 billion) is .00081, or less than one one-thousandth.

The wholesale value includes the value of the harvested trees, plus the costs of logging, log transportation, and sawmill operation. It measures the economic contribution of *the timber extraction industries* of the state. These are the industries that directly affect the condition of the forests and watersheds of the state, or in the case of sawmills, whose production is closely tied to timber extraction.

The broader "lumber and wood products industries" constitute about 0.3 percent of the state's economic production, but it is erroneous to link the health of wood product processing industries to the operations of the timber extraction industries. These industries have continued to expand as California timber production has declined, by importing the needed wood from other states and Canada.

forests. Research and demonstration on timber extraction activities should take place within the context of the primary priority.

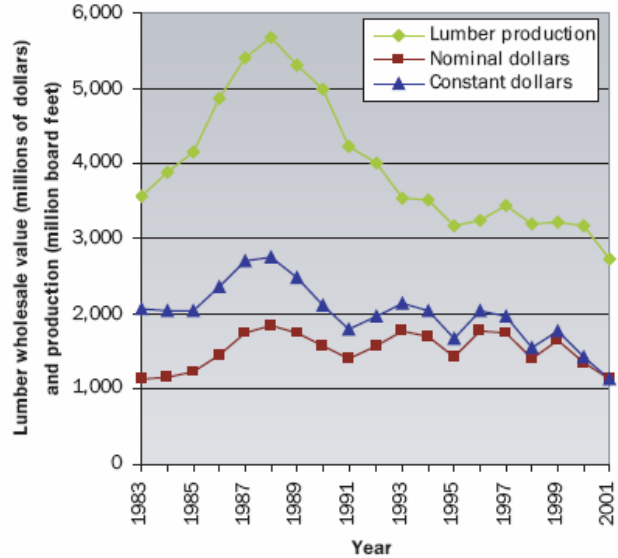
Forest and Timber Background

[The following text and figures are excerpted from *The Changing California, Forest and Range Assessment 2003*, prepared by the California Department of Forestry. Highlights to the text are supplied by the author and did not appear in the original.]

Lumber production in California reached a low in 2001 of just over 2.7 billion board feet, with an approximate wholesale value of \$1.1 billion dollars (Figure 77). This is the lowest year in the last two decades, continuing to follow an overall downward trend both in number of sawmills and lumber output.

To meet the growing demand for lumber and other forest products, **a demand that is equivalent to over 10 billion board feet of lumber, paper, and other wood products annually, Californians rely heavily on imports.**² Estimates of wood product inflows from other states into California indicate at least three billion board feet of lumber was imported from other western states (Western Wood Products Association, 2002). In 2002, Oregon was California’s single largest supplier of lumber. Additional lumber was also imported from Canada as well as other countries and southern states. In addition, California imports nearly all of its pulp and paper.

Figure 77. Lumber production and wholesale value in current and 1990 constant dollars, 1983-2001

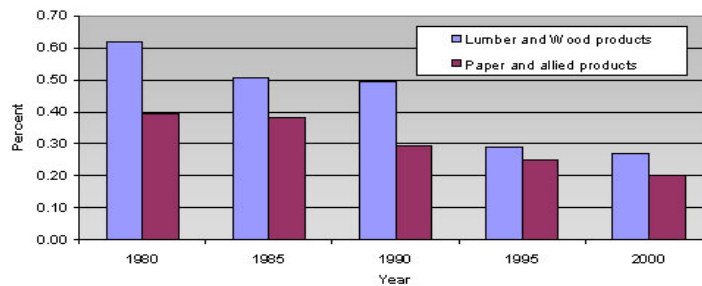


Source: Western Wood Products Association, 2002

Value of products from forest product sectors

The percentage of the state GSP represented directly by the lumber and wood products industry in 2000 is just under 0.3 percent (Figure 1).³

Figure 1. Lumber, wood, paper, and allied products Gross State Product as a percentage of total California Gross State Product, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2000 (1996 constant dollars). U.S. Department of Commerce 2002b



² California timber production fulfilled only 27 percent of estimated consumption of wood products, including paper and cardboard.

³ The timber extraction industries accounted for only .08 of one percent of GSP.

Geographic Scope

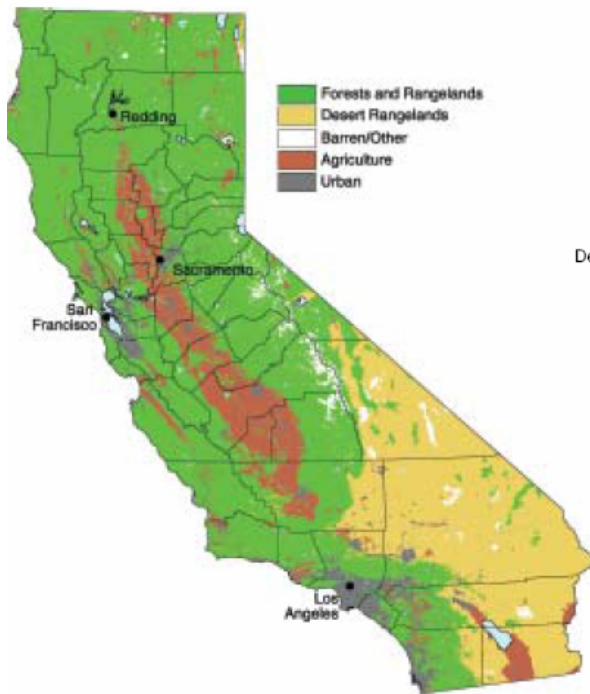
California covers a vast landscape of over 100 million acres, of which over 80 percent are defined as forests and rangelands (Table 3, Figure 10). The geographic scope of forests and rangelands are addressed by statute as those suitable for timber production or grazing by domestic livestock, and other forested lands (Figure 9)...

Table 3. Area of land cover classes by major ownership (thousand acres)

| Land cover class | Private | USFS | BLM | NPS | Other public | Total |
|----------------------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|--------------|---------|
| Conifer Forest | 6,432 | 10,644 | 394 | 1,108 | 426 | 19,004 |
| Conifer Woodland | 458 | 1,051 | 482 | 220 | 151 | 2,363 |
| Hardwood Forest | 2,901 | 1,287 | 176 | 134 | 193 | 4,691 |
| Hardwood Woodland | 4,292 | 310 | 239 | 36 | 309 | 5,188 |
| Shrub | 5,433 | 5,673 | 2,261 | 319 | 878 | 14,565 |
| Grassland | 9,621 | 233 | 496 | 43 | 526 | 10,919 |
| Desert Woodland | 42 | 3 | 55 | 22 | 12 | 134 |
| Desert Shrub | 4,256 | 197 | 10,198 | 4,656 | 4,106 | 23,414 |
| Wetland (F&R)* | 145 | 69 | 11 | 20 | 23 | 268 |
| Forest and Rangeland Total | 33,582 | 19,468 | 14,312 | 6,558 | 6,626 | 80,545 |
| Wetland (non F&R)* | 189 | (L) | 1 | 2 | 80 | 272 |
| Agriculture | 11,201 | 4 | 42 | (L) | 174 | 11,421 |
| Barren/Other | 229 | 918 | 203 | 680 | 254 | 2,283 |
| Urban | 4,606 | 17 | 29 | 8 | 250 | 4,909 |
| Water** | | | | | | 1,486 |
| Statewide Total | 49,805 | 20,406 | 14,587 | 7,247 | 7,384 | 100,915 |

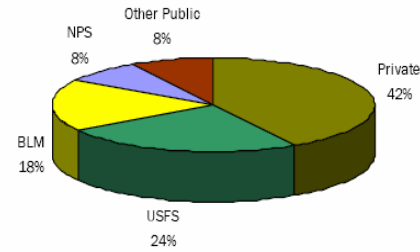
* Only the Wet Meadow CWHR habitat type is considered forests and rangelands. See Appendix.
 ** Areas classified as water are not assigned an ownership.
 (L) - less than 500 acres; BLM - U.S. Bureau of Land Management; NPS - National Park Service; USFS - U.S. Forest Service; F&R - forests and rangelands
 Source: FRAP, 1999; FRAP, 2002d

Figure 9. Forests and rangelands of California



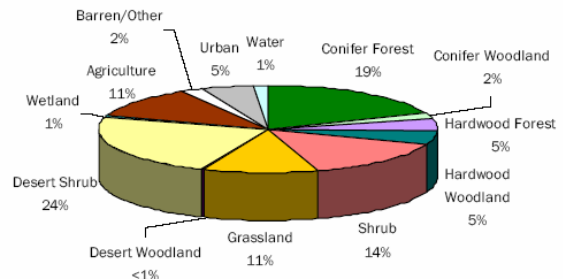
Source: FRAP, 2002d

Figure 14. Percentage area of forests and rangelands by major ownership



Source: FRAP, 1999; FRAP, 2002d

Figure 10. Percentage area of land cover classes, statewide



Source: FRAP, 2002d

Note: This paper was prepared for the first meeting of the Demonstration State Forest Advisory Group, meeting in Santa Rosa, California on May 25, 2005