

**Indicator 11. Total Growing Stock of Both Merchantable and Nonmerchantable Tree Species on Forest Land Available for Timber Production**

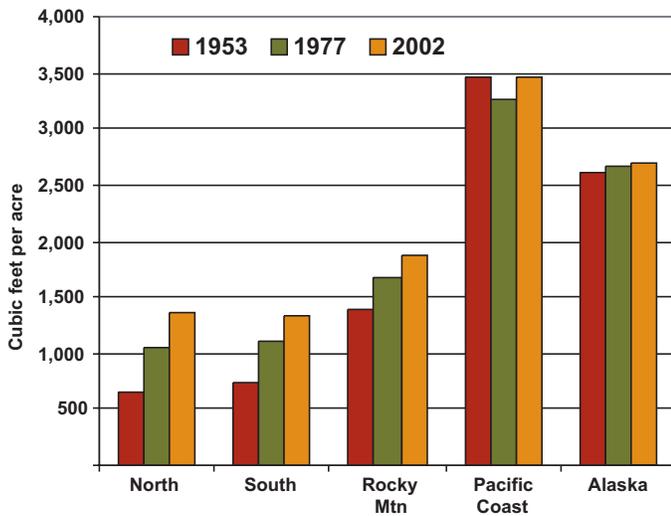


Figure 11-1. Growing stock volume per acre on timber land by region, 1953-2002.

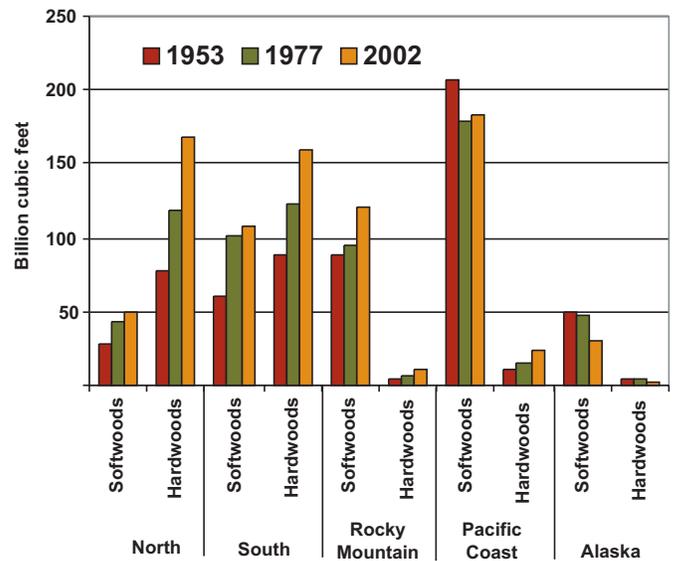


Figure 11-2. Growing stock volume on timber land by region and species group 1953-2002.

**What Is the Indicator and Why Is It Important?**

Growing stock is a fundamental element in determining the productive capacity of the area identified as forest available for timber production. Knowledge of growing stock of the various species that make up the forest and how growing stock changes over time is central to considerations of a sustainable supply of wood for products and the sustainability of the ecosystems that provide them.

**What Does the Indicator Show?**

The Nation’s timber lands contain more than 800 species of trees. Variability in the condition of the size and quality of those trees has considerable bearing on their value in wood products. Generally speaking, about 94 percent of all live tree volume on U.S. timber land is considered to be growing stock, or wood capable of being used for commercial products. The remaining 6 percent is considered to be trees of poor form and/or small stature, or that are otherwise unsuited for wood products. With the relatively stable base of forest land available for timber production or timber land (indicator 10) and a historic pattern of growth exceeding removals (indicator 13), the volume of growing stock in the United States has been rising steadily for

more than 50 years. The current growing stock of 856 billion cubic feet is 39 percent higher than the volume in 1953. The Nation’s conifer-growing stock volume totals 492 billion cubic feet, or 57 percent of all growing stock. Conifer-growing stock volume is concentrated in the West. At 364 billion cubic feet, broadleaf species account for 43 percent of all growing stock timber volume in the United States. Broadleaf volume has risen 98 percent as second- and third-growth forests in the North and South continue to mature.

Ownership of timber land has a direct effect on the availability of timber for products. As public policy responds to increasing demand for using public forest land for recreation, wildlife habitats, and biodiversity conservation, the area and corresponding volume of timber available for harvest from public timber lands has been declining, which places additional pressure on private timber land and imports. This pressure is further heightened by improved technologies that enable a shift to broadleaf species, which are dominant on private timber lands, for many previously conifer-dominated products such as paper and composite products. Overall, per-acre volume on private timber land is increasing but has slowed in response to increasing demand caused by shifts in public policy and wood product-processing technology.