

**Indicator 23. Percent of Water Bodies in Forest Areas (e.g., Stream Kilometers, Lake Hectares) with Significant Variance of Biological Diversity from the Historic Range of Variability**

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

This indicator measures how well biological diversity (however measured) compares with what might be expected under natural or "historic" conditions. Water bodies where biological diversity is "close" to natural or historic conditions are more likely to withstand natural and manmade stresses.

**Why Can't This Indicator Be Reported at This Time?**

Comparisons of current conditions with natural or historic conditions must be tailored to each region of the country to ensure that each stream or lake is compared with the appropriate reference. Only a handful of States regularly conduct quantitative tests of the condition of fish or bottom-dwelling animal communities. Thirty States are developing such tests, and five States already use such tests in regulating water quality.