



## The National Woodland Owner Survey

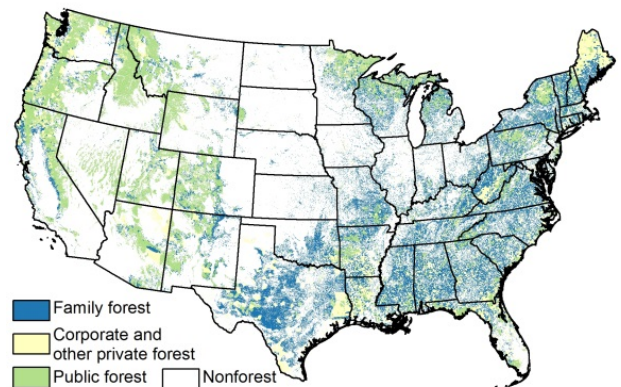
### Understanding Family Forest Owners

## Background

The U.S. Forest Service's Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program administers the National Woodland Owner Survey to understand who owns the nation's 475 million acres (192 million hectares) of private forest, why they own it, what they have done with it in the past, and what they intend to do with it in the future. Understanding the future of forests in the United States demands that we understand the people who own a plurality of this land – family forest owners. The results from the National Woodland Owner Survey are being released in the form of national, regional, and state tables and summaries, peer-reviewed journal articles, landowner magazines, and customizable output from the National Woodland Owner Survey table maker program (<http://apps.fs.fed.us/fia/nwos/tablemaker.jsp>).

## Results

- Family forest ownerships control 36 percent of America's forestland, more than any other ownership group. An estimated 290 million acres (117 million hectares) of forestland in the U.S. are owned by an estimated 11 million families, individuals, trusts, estates, and family forest partnerships, collectively referred to as family forest ownerships.
- The average family forest ownership has 27 acres of forestland. Sixty-two percent of the ownerships have relatively small holdings between 1-9 acres, but 56 percent of the family forest area is owned by ownerships with 100 acres or more.
- The most commonly cited reasons for owning family forests are related to the beauty and privacy the forests provide along with wildlife and nature protection.
- Just 13 percent of family forest ownerships have a written forest management plan and only 20 percent have received forest management advice in the previous five years.
- The average age of family forest owners is 63 years with 48 percent of the family forestland owned by people who are at least 65 years of age.



Forest Ownership Across the United States.

## Implications

In the United States, family forest ownerships control more forest land than any other ownership group. Understanding the characteristics of family forest ownerships is critical for developing and delivering effective programs, policies, and services. For programs and policies to reach more owners, they need to be designed to better meet the needs and objectives of the owners, most of whom are more interested in amenity than financial benefits. In addition, engaging family forest owners is increasing important as more conservation efforts require working across all ownerships to address landscape-level issues, be it wildfire mitigation, water supply, invasive species, or carbon storage.

