

Table 3.7 -2. Percentage contribution of different landowners to sustainable timber harvest levels in the drier ecoregions

Land Owner	Percentage of Sustainable Harvest
Forest Industry	46
Private Nonindustrial	20
Other Public (includes BLM)	13
Forest Service	21

The estimate for the Forest Service reflects the average timber harvest levels of 1995-1998, a period during which the agency was attempting to implement a management strategy that emphasized protection of biodiversity. Future harvests will probably mirror the relatively low levels of the past few years unless a major federal initiative is successfully undertaken to improve the health of the forests in this region through active management.

Estimates for the Other Public category come from a combination of agency plans (BLM harvests in the drier portion of the Klamath Mountains) and recent harvest levels on Indian reservations. For private lands, the estimates reflect projections of sustainable harvest levels done by the College of Forestry (Sessions 1991, Greber, et al. 1993).

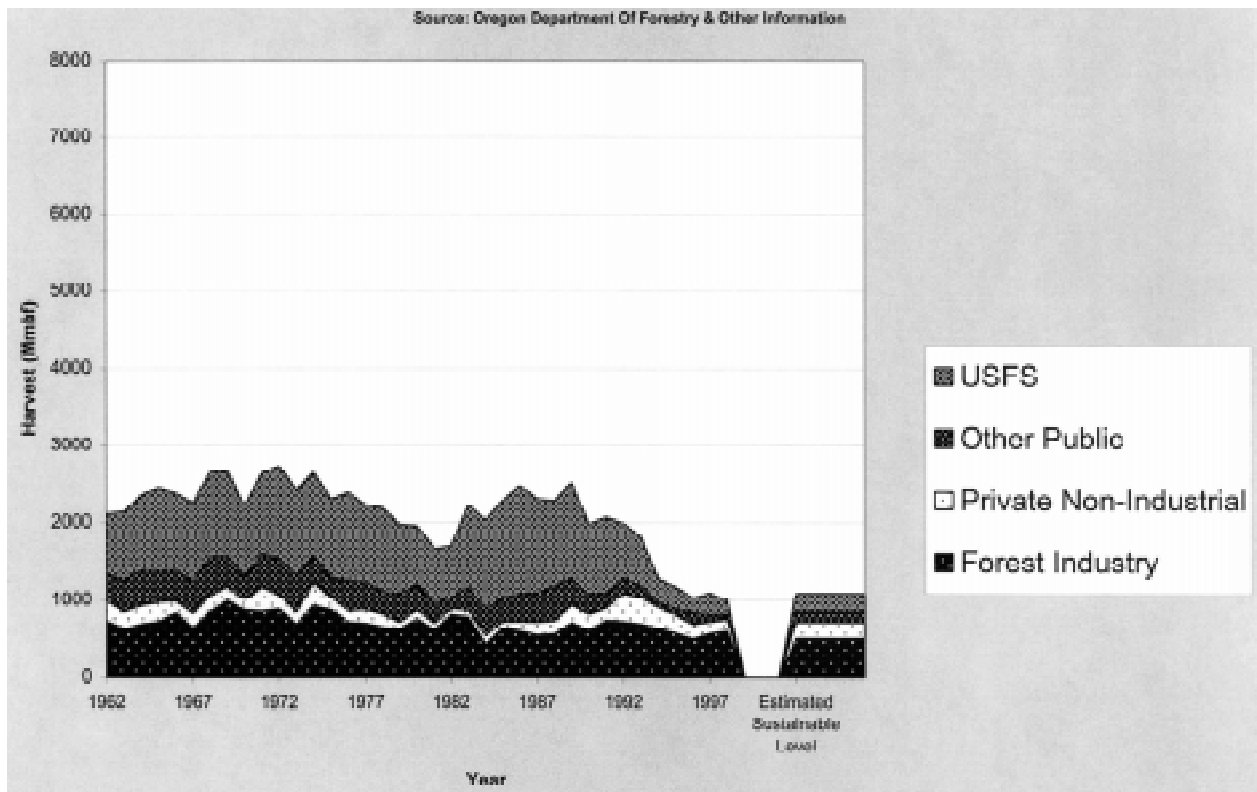
Confidence in the Data for the Production of Goods and Services

We have measured timber harvest and growth for a relatively long time—at least for the last 50 years—through the continuous forest inventory done on federal and nonfederal lands by the Forest Service, through growth and yield studies by many different scientists, and through the timber harvest reports of the State. In addition, the OSU College of Forestry has done a series of reports that estimate sustainable harvest levels using this information and other data (Beuter 1976, Sessions 1991). These efforts have given us a reasonable approximation of the growth and harvest potential of private landowners in Western Oregon. Shifting plans and controversies surrounding federal and State lands have made estimates of the growth and harvest potential on these lands more difficult to make.

Confidence in the Data for Assessing Naturally Functioning Landscapes

We have only recently begun to study and measure the characteristic composition, structure, and processes of our different forest types in Oregon, but efforts in the last decade have made significant strides in our understanding. In the wetter ecoregions, fire history work based on charcoal analysis in the Coast Range has led to simulation models that have begun to quantify the historical range of variability in the com-

Figure 3.7-6. Drier ecoregions: historical harvest and estimated sustainable level by owner



position and structure of the forests there, but the work is still preliminary. Similar work has been initiated in the Cascades and the synthesis of that work is ongoing. Recent studies of the Willamette Valley have been enormously helpful in piecing together the historical landscape and the large-scale alteration of this landscape in the last 150 years.

In the drier ecoregions, the recent major effort in the interior Columbia basin by Forest Service scientists provides a comparison of current and historical compositions, structures, and processes (see the Range chapter for examples of this work on the forests and rangelands of eastern Oregon). Also, studies in eastern Oregon and interior Klamath Mountains on historical stand composition and densities provide insights on the build-up in stand densities and changing species over time.

Even with all this work, comprehensive, quantitative information on characteristic compositions, structures, and processes for each forest type is difficult to obtain. Thus, professional judgment and basic principles of forest development must liberally complement the information we do have to draw conclusions about ecological health.

Future projections

In this work, we focus primarily on two perspectives of ecological health: naturally functioning landscapes and production of desired goods and services. The tension between the two perspectives of ecological health has led to legislation, regulation, and control as we try to achieve some sort of “balance” in our emphasis on the different definitions of health. We see this most clearly on federal lands, but salmon conservation and other issues increase this tension on private lands also. With economic pressures pushing down the average age of timber stands on private lands, we can expect these tensions to continue into the future, leading to proposals for new laws and policies. Some landowners, such as the State, are trying innovative ways to increase the compatibility of the values expressed in the different definitions of ecological health. The success of these commendable efforts awaits to be seen.

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