

Maintaining North Carolina Healthy Forests

When I think of forests; an image of serenity, safety, and wellness comes to me. Forests are cool and often quiet. Their true treasures lie in their purity. Animals and plants thriving in a natural balance that humans rarely understand. As you drive, walk, or bike along the periphery of a forest; the dynamic relationships that are shielded from view are amazing and required for us to maintain the quality of life we enjoy today.



Detrimental Effects of Deforestation on Environment

- Increase greenhouse gases,
- Destruction of critical wetlands,
- Negative impacts on animal habitats,
- Removal of native plant species,
- Removal of natural soil and water filtration by trees and other plants, and
- Overall disturbance of the ecosystem.

The southern United States holds about 40% of the country's timberland in its forests. Timberland not only supplies the lumber, pulp, and paper industries; but also the surging wood pellet industries. These increased deforestation activities were initiated to produce wood pellets for export to European and other countries. Because of the surging wood pellet market, it is projected that deforestation will continue to increase over the next 5 years.

Currently, there are no state-sponsored best management practices prescribed specifically for harvesting and utilizing forest/woody material for biomass energy production. This loophole in North Carolina's and other southern states environmental laws has allowed for deforestation to increase significantly in the southern US.



Deforestation Impacts on Affected Communities Human Health

- Respiratory impacts due to increased concentration of particulates,
- Noise pollution due to increased logging traffic,
- Negative impacts on roads that logging trucks frequent, and
- Overall disturbance of the quality of life of the people living in communities where deforestation is occurring, facilities where logs are processed, and communities where wood pellets are shipped from.

The Cypress Group of the Sierra Club has identified "Maintaining North Carolina's Healthy Forests" as a conservation priority. The Group will continue to work to increase awareness of this issue. For more information regarding this issue, contact James Woodley at (252)752-7324 or via Email at woodley50@yahoo.com