REPORT ON THE STATUS OF INDIAN FOREST LANDS
FISCAL YEAR 2019

AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 312 (C)
OF THE

NATIONAL INDIAN FOREST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACT
P.L. 101-630

SUBMITTED TO

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN, INSULAR AND ALASKA NATIVE AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AND

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

SUBMITTED BY

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF TRUST SERVICES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

WASHINGTON, D.C.

May, 2020

Indian Forestry Status Report to Congress
Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Trust Services
Division of Forestry and Wildland Fire Management

Fiscal Year 2019

Purpose

Public Law 101-630, Title III, 104 Stat. 4532, entitled the *National Indian Forest Resources Management Act of 1990* (NIFRMA), requires the Secretary of the Interior to submit an annual Indian Forestry Status Report to Congress. Section 312 (c) of this Act reads as follows:

> *STATUS REPORT TO CONGRESS- The Secretary shall submit, within 1 year of the first full fiscal year after the date of enactment of this title and within 6 months of the end of each succeeding fiscal year, a report to Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the United States House of Representatives, the Select Committee on Indian Affairs of the United States Senate, and to the affected Indian tribes a report on the status of Indian forest lands with respect to standards, goals and objectives set forth in approved forest management plans for each Indian tribe with Indian forest lands. The report shall identify the amount of Indian forest land in need of forestation or other silviculture treatment and the quantity of timber available for sale, offered for sale, and sold for each Indian tribe.*

This Report is prepared and submitted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the primary Federal agency responsible for fiduciary trust oversight of forest management activities on Indian forest lands.

The BIA Forestry Mission

The mission of the BIA, Office of Trust Services, Division of Forestry and Wildland Fire Management is to provide specialized budget and policy oversight and technical expertise in forest and wildland fire management to Native American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives. In cooperation with 310 tribes, over 18 million acres of Tribal and allotted trust forest lands are actively managed for a variety of purposes. Forests provide a key source of revenue and jobs for tribes and individual Indians, and play an important role in sustaining tribal cultures and traditions. Management activities within forest lands are governed by forest management plans which outline ecologically and biologically sustainable forest management practices formulated to meet tribal goals and objectives. Forest management activities include timber sales, timber stand improvement (thinning and pruning), prescribed burning, and reforestation.

The BIA is committed to helping tribes manage forests to provide a sustained yield of forest products and to restore and maintain resilient and ecologically-functional lands. BIA's interdisciplinary approach to forest resource management includes partnerships

with tribal forestry and fire programs, Federal, State, and local land management agencies, the Intertribal Timber Council, academia, and non-governmental agencies. Tribes actively work with cooperators such as the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management through the Tribal Forest Protection Act and other authorities which create opportunities for larger, cross-jurisdictional treatments. The BIA supports Tribal goals aimed at achieving a balance of the protection of valued landscapes with the production of economic benefit through active forest management.

Fiscal Year 2019 Accomplishments

Accomplishments for fiscal year (FY) 2019 include the following.

- 19,240 acres planted (Reforestation)
- 18,809 acres thinned (Timber Stand Improvement)
- 748 million board feet of timber available for harvest (allowable annual cut)
- 342 million board feet of timber harvested generating $50 million in Tribal income

	FY 2016	**FY2017**	**FY2018**	**FY2019**
Timber Harvested *(thousand board feet)*	445,642	384,246	388,002	342,197
Timber Available for Harvest *(thousand board feet)*	727,000	740,000	750,000	748,000
Stumpage Income Generated *($ dollars)*	$ 55,074,148	$54,526,516	$86,127,672	$49,994,527
Thinning Acres	14,111	17,073	16,223	18,809
Reforestation Acres	9,825	11,306	13,773	19,240

Current Challenges

Indian forestry has historically faced an array of complex challenges. While this remains true, BIA and tribal foresters are dedicated to the mission of supporting tribal goals for maintaining the health and economic productivity of Indian forests while also providing a host of ecological services and cultural experiences. These foresters address challenges with creativity, flexibility, and pragmatism, striving for efficiency of operations through the attainment of multiple objectives for each treatment and adapting quickly to new circumstances.

Some of the challenges to Indian forestry include limited budget allocations; high rates of staff turnover; field locations that are distant from processing facilities; limited infrastructure, hampering transportation and communication; development and land conversion to non-forest uses; and natural factors such as wildland fire, insect infestations

and disease outbreaks, invasive species, and climate and weather extremes. Predominant issues include the following.

Workforce. These issues include natural turnover of the workforce from retirements of Baby Boom generation workers, accelerated by repeated workforce reduction efforts; lack of training and continuing education due to budget restrictions and limited availability of staff time needed to plan and carry out training sessions; and low rates of retention of new hires due to remote locations, difficult working conditions, and limited investment in employee development. Lack of trained personnel in forestry has a direct adverse economic impact on the tribes: despite a target specified by policy of preparing 100% of the annual allowable cut for harvest, in FY 2019 only 47% of the annual allowable cut was prepared.

Markets. The forest products industry has been in a state of rapid change since the mid-1990s. While some of this is due to the adoption of new technologies and changes in consumer demand such as the replacement of paper products by electronic equivalents, much of it is due to the behavior of corporate actors. Individual companies have merged, eliminated work divisions in favor of using contractors, and closed outdated facilities rather than modernizing them. Smaller companies, including some operated by tribes, struggle due to lack of capital needed to update badly outdated mills, or due to uncertain supply chains caused by changes in availability of timber from federal lands, natural disruptions such as large wildland fires, and extreme shifts in operating costs tied to energy prices. Tribal forest management is often geared toward a single market, and lack of secondary market outlets makes forest product sales vulnerable to the economic externalities that affect primary markets.

Emergency planning. In the U.S., the Federal, state and local governments, corporations and small businesses, and individuals and families remain unprepared for natural disasters including wildfires, floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes. BIA's Tribal Resilience program supports initiatives from tribes to better protect themselves, but grant funding for these projects is limited, and the effort isn't systematic, with only a few tribal governments and intertribal organizations having the capacity to draft project proposals and to carry out these efforts. Moreover, tribal vulnerabilities are generally so numerous that only the most immediate needs receive attention, and threats to tribal forests are often neglected. The result is that natural conditions that could protect communities from natural disasters instead exacerbate their effects. Examples include wildfires that ravage tribal communities because wildland-urban interface funding for fuels treatments are sufficient only for piecemeal treatments rather than comprehensively addressing the threat; or insufficient stream and wetland restoration work that leaves reservation communities vulnerable to floods.

Each of these broad areas include numerous specific challenges where making investments to take appropriate action could mitigate many issues and improve conditions.

The Indian Forest Management Assessment Team

During the development of the NIFRMA, Congress declared that the United States has a trust responsibility toward Indian forest lands, and that Federal investment in Indian forest management is significantly below the level of investment in United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, or private forest land management (25 USC Sec. 3111). The NIFRMA requires the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an independent assessment of Indian Forestry every 10 years. This assessment is conducted through the Indian Forest Management Assessment Team (IFMAT) process following regulations prescribed in 25 CFR 163.80. The most recent IFMAT process was carried out from 2011 to 2013 and found that "the federal government continues to inadequately fulfill its trust obligations to Indian forestry" and that "funding and staffing levels are lower now than at the time of IFMAT-I and well below those of comparable public and private programs." The fourth iteration of the IFMAT process is being planned in 2020 and will commence in 2021, with the final report expected in 2023.

The complete 2013 IFMAT assessment can be found at:
http://www.itcnet.org/issues_projects/issues_2/forest_management/assessment.html

Further Information

For questions related to this report, please contact Peter Wakeland, Chief Forester, Division of Forestry and Wildland Fire Management, BIA Office of Trust Services, at (505) 563-5252 or, peter.wakeland@bia.gov.

Mailed inquiries may be sent to:

Chief Forester, Division of Forestry and Wildland Fire Management
Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Trust Services
1849 C Street, NW, MS-4620-MIB
Washington, DC 20240

FY 2019 INDIAN FORESTRY STATUS REPORT TO CONGRESS											
	Current Approved Forest Management Plans	Reforestation		Timber Stand Improvement		Available Volume		Timber Volume		Timber Harvested	
Reservation		Planted Acres	Need Acres	Thinned Acres	Need Acres	Timberland (Thousand Board Feet)	Woodland (Thousand Cords)	Offered (MBM)	Sold (MBM)	Volume (MBM)	Value ($)
ALASKA TOTALS	**11**	**76**	**10**	**40**	**5,095**	**10,571**	**0**	**9,325**	**0**	**0**	**$ -**
EASTERN TOTALS	**24**	**0**	**741**	**0**	**18,113**	**40,900**	**0**	**8,322**	**998**	**3,073**	**$ 1,048,633**
EASTERN OKLAHOMA TOTALS	**14**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**2,267**	**0**	**11**	**9**	**9**	**$ 200**
GREAT PLAINS TOTALS	**15**	**272**	**13,328**	**60**	**2,911**	**2,621**	**49**	**30**	**0**	**30**	**$ 600**
MIDWEST TOTALS	**41**	**636**	**62,562**	**3,243**	**37,487**	**173,404**	**0**	**87,882**	**80,979**	**66,833**	**$ 7,131,751**
NAVAJO TOTALS	**1**	**0**	**10,335**	**91**	**490**	**15,900**	**89**	**36,341**	**32,696**	**25,749**	**$ 97,665**
NORTHWEST TOTALS	**48**	**16,060**	**347,748**	**7,916**	**265,190**	**375,146**	**0**	**309,277**	**276,703**	**220,227**	**$ 34,833,490**
PACIFIC TOTALS	**70**	**290**	**15,404**	**766**	**24,652**	**14,692**	**311**	**13,303**	**12,608**	**9,783**	**$ 1,860,843**
ROCKY MOUNTAIN TOTALS	**7**	**1,141**	**12,721**	**385**	**62,953**	**16,690**	**4**	**516**	**516**	**920**	**$ 23,813**
SOUTHERN PLAINS TOTALS	**22**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**600**	**0**	**99**	**99**	**99**	**$ 19,064**
SOUTHWEST TOTALS	**23**	**571**	**27,651**	**1,610**	**86,944**	**34,600**	**66**	**1,898**	**1,898**	**2,489**	**$ 168,585**
WESTERN TOTALS	**37**	**194**	**65,546**	**4,698**	**82,289**	**60,520**	**56**	**276**	**9,170**	**12,984**	**$ 4,809,883**
NATIONAL TOTALS	**313**	**19,240**	**556,046**	**18,809**	**586,124**	**747,911**	**575**	**467,280**	**415,676**	**342,197**	**$ 49,994,527**