REPORT ON THE STATUS OF INDIAN FOREST LANDS
FISCAL YEAR 2024

AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 312 (C)
OF THE

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

SUBMITTED TO

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AND

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

SUBMITTED BY

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF TRUST SERVICES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY
ALBUQUERQUE, NM

April 2025

Indian Forestry Status Report to Congress
Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Trust Services
Division of Forestry and Wildland Fire Management
Fiscal Year 2024

Purpose

Public Law 101-630, Title III, 104 Stat. 4532, entitled the *National Indian Forest Resources Management Act* (NIFRMA), requires the Secretary of the Interior to submit an annual Indian Forestry Status Report to Congress. Section 312 (c) of this Act, codified at 25 U.S.C. § 3111(c), reads as follows:

> *STATUS REPORT TO CONGRESS- The Secretary shall submit, within 1 year of the first full fiscal year after November 28, 1990 and within 6 months of the end of each succeeding fiscal year, a report to Committee on Natural Resources of the United States House of Representatives, the 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 Bureau of Indian Affairs Forestry Mission

The mission of the BIA, Office of Trust Services, Division of Forestry is to provide specialized budget and policy oversight and technical expertise in forest management to American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives. In cooperation with 315 tribes, over 19 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 forest inventories, timber stand improvement (thinning and pruning), prescribed burning, and reforestation.

The BIA help 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 United

States Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) 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 2024 Accomplishments

Accomplishments for fiscal year (FY) 2024 include the following.

- 308 million board feet of timber volume harvested generating $50 million in stumpage income
- 687 million board feet of timber volume available for harvest (allowable annual cut)
- 19,581 acres planted (Reforestation)
- 13,848 acres precommercial thinned (Timber Stand Improvement)

	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Timber Harvested (thousand board feet)	395,426	313,268	274,446	307,880
Timber Available for Harvest (thousand board feet)	733,022	712,753	741,446	687,394
Stumpage Income Generated	$79,857,236	$79,050,564	$50,026,630	$49,579,935
Thinning Acres	23,952	26,329	13,848	11,800
Reforestation Acres	13,425	23,627	19,581	30,831

The attached spreadsheets provide both national and regional details on the FY 2024 data. In the spreadsheets, MBF stands for one thousand board feet.

BIA Timber Team

The BIA Timber Team advanced sustainable forest management and Tribal sovereignty by supporting 16 Tribes across eight states with forest inventories, timber sale preparations, silvicultural prescriptions, and training, while engaging in key industry forums like the Society of American Foresters Convention and the Intertribal Timber Council Symposium.

Accomplishments for fiscal year (FY) 2024 include the following.

- Remeasured 137 continuous forest inventory plots and 2,037 pinyon pine/juniper trees.
- Completed 744 stand examination plots and 543 timber cruise plots.
- Prepared 3,449 acres for commercial harvesting and hazardous fuels reduction.
- Trained Tribal technicians and foresters.

Current Challenges

Timber Harvest. In FY 2024 53% of the allowable annual cut of 687,394 thousand board feet identified in forest management plans was prepared for sale and 45% of the allowable annual cut was harvested which resulted in $50 million in stumpage income generated for the tribes. To assist tribal forest products production, BIA Forestry has funded 25 small infrastructure projects for 21 tribes totaling $4.7 million since 2018. BIA Forestry also established a Timber Team in FY 2020 that travels to field units to prepare timber sales and help complete forest management projects. This not only accomplishes important field work but also provides training and recruitment opportunities for BIA and tribal staff. Further expansion of the Timber Team is needed.

Markets. Since the mid-1990s, the forest products industry has undergone rapid transformation. Technological advancements and shifting consumer preferences, such as the decline in paper products due to digital alternatives, have driven some changes. However, broader market dynamics play a significant role. Large companies have consolidated through mergers, outsourced divisions to contractors, and shuttered outdated facilities rather than modernizing them. Smaller firms, including some tribal operations, face challenges from limited capital for upgrading aging mills and from unstable supply chains. These instabilities stem from reduced timber availability on federal lands, natural disruptions like large wildfires, and fluctuating energy costs. Tribal forest management often relies on a single market, leaving sales vulnerable to economic externalities without diversified secondary market outlets.

Workforce. Workforce challenges in BIA forestry include high turnover from retirements and resignations, worsened by low recruitment and retention rates, remote Agency office locations, and extreme working conditions. As of FY24, BIA forestry faced a 45% vacancy rate in forestry positions. Priorities include workforce development and outreach, with identified gaps and training needs. Recruiting and training Pathways students is critical to address these shortages in Indian country.

Timber Stand Improvement. Reducing the backlog of acres in need of timber stand improvement (TSI) treatments remains a challenge. Thinning acres decreased by 2,048 acres over the FY 2023 level while the total backlog of acres in need of treatment increased by 42,229 acres. TSI practices that improve the health, stocking, composition, and productivity of forest stands are essential for sustainable forest management and ensuring future revenue streams, timber supplies, employment opportunities, and resilient forest ecosystems for tribal communities. All twelve BIA Regions report maintenance needs for roads that are necessary for the management and protection of Indian forest lands and to harvest timber.

Reforestation. Investments in tribal greenhouses that grow conifer seedlings are needed to increase capacity and reduce the nearly 580,000 acres currently in need of reforestation. Personnel, collecting equipment, and modern storage facilities are also necessary for the development of tribal seed banks for the restoration of native and culturally significant plant and tree species.

Despite these challenges, tribes are assuming greater leadership in Indian Forestry through self-determination and self-governance. BIA and tribal programs have the potential to provide models for sustainable forestry and resource management for the nation's forests.

The Indian Forest Management Assessment Team

During the development of the NIFRMA, Congress declared 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 (25 U.S.C. § 3101). The NIFRMA requires the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an independent assessment of Indian Forestry every 10 years (25 U.S.C. § 3111(b)). This assessment is conducted through the Indian Forest Management Assessment Team (IFMAT) process following regulations prescribed in 25 C.F.R. Part 163, Subpart F. The most recent IFMAT process (IFMAT-IV) was carried out from 2021 to 2023 and found "funding for BIA Forestry continues to be far below investments in the United States Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management funding for comparable lands," "limited staffing and issues around workforce capacity are impacting tribal forest management," and "roads, facilities, and enforcement on tribal forests are in dire state."

The complete 2023 IFMAT Report can be found at:

Forestry Assessment : Forest Management : Issues : Issues & Projects : Intertribal Timber Council (itcnet.org)

Further Information

For questions related to this report, please contact Caleb Cain, Acting Chief Forester, Division of Forestry, BIA Office of Trust Service, at Caleb.Cain@bia.gov.

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REGION	Tribes/Management Units	Reforestation		Stand Improvement		Available Volume		Timber Volume		Timber Harvested	
		Planted Acres	Need Acres	Thinned Acres	Need Acres	Timberland (MBF)	Woodland (MBF)	Offered (MBF)	Sold (MBF)	Volume (MBF)	Value ($)
ALASKA	11	0	0		1,495	8,356	0	0	0	0	$0
EASTERN	25	180	21	13	4,427	36,245	0	18,564	2,996	8,092	$406,099
EASTERN OKLAHOMA	14	0	55	206	465	2,444	3,597	3	3	706	$285,100
GREAT PLAINS	15	0	14,218		6,808	3,680	39,221	0	0	0	$0
MIDWEST	41	1,186	63,566	1,013	35,390	133,341	0	64,584	57,438	62,703	$5,597,381
NAVAJO	1	0		0		15,900	2,280	27,551	27,551	27,551	$91,959
NORTHWEST	46	27,038	384,333	7,279	128,155	371,245	60	222,107	220,259	195,597	$39,236,833
PACIFIC	73	388	1,369	175	637	17,445	8,790	16,349	7,441	2,972	$1,006,735
ROCKY MOUNTAIN	7	1,420	32,564	237	52,839	14,700	16,900	0	0	0	$0
SOUTHERN PLAINS	22	0	0		0	600	0	0	0	346	$5,657
SOUTHWEST	24	51	20,205	1,634	381,910	32,917	47,360	734	734	852	$28,303
WESTERN	37	568	63,018	1,243	13,102	50,520	6,918	14,484	14,484	9,061	$2,921,868
TOTAL	**316**	**30,831**	**579,349**	**11,800**	**625,228**	**687,394**	**125,126**	**364,375**	**330,905**	**307,880**	**$49,579,935**