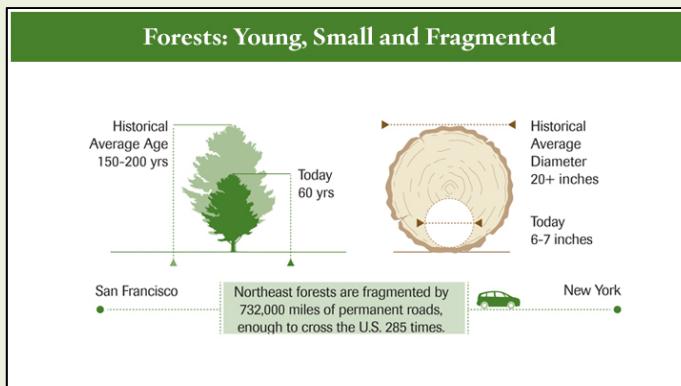


MATURE FORESTS – Continuing the Comeback

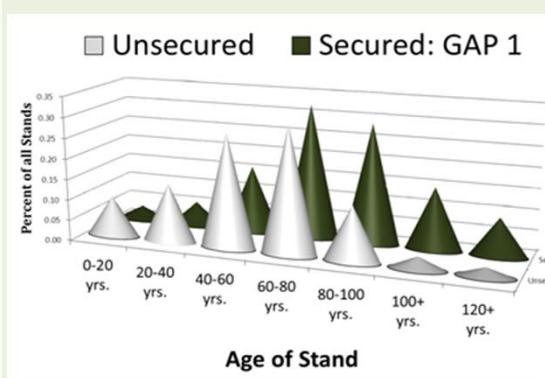
The tangled canopies and humus-rich soils of a mature forest provide homes to thousands of species, from nesting warblers to elusive martins. Many of these species show a strong preference for the quiet, secluded environments of the forest interior. Yet the forests that now blanket our landscape bear only a superficial resemblance to the forests of the past.

Forever Young: Eastern forests are not growing older.

Cleared for pasture and agriculture at the turn of the century, the return of the forest to the Northeast is a story of recovery laced with repeated setbacks. Harvesting, now on its third or fourth cycle, is pervasive and periodic. Data show that individual forest stands, naturally living for several centuries, rarely make it past 60 years of age. This results in a perpetually young forest of thin trees.



As forest cover returned to the Northeast, human population grew from a few thousand to 70 million. Roads went from nonexistent to ubiquitous, and are now extensive enough to circle the earth 29 times. Development and roads fragment the forest into patches, dramatically decreasing the amount of forest interior by introducing noise, predators and disturbances.



Old Forests

Citizens and public agencies together have set aside 5 percent of all forest land specifically for nature (GAP 1). Data show that these secured forests are older and have more structure (logs, snags, understory) that promotes diversity and builds stability.

Barring any unforeseen change, our grandchildren may be able to experience older forests at a scale that does not currently exist, bringing with it cleaner water and thriving forest birds, plants and other wildlife.

* The term "Northeast" and all statistics refer to the 13 New England and Mid-Atlantic states.



Structure of Old Forests

Tip-up mounds, rotting logs, and understory, create stability and diversity.



Old logs create wildlife habitat and seedbeds for new trees.



Young forests tend to have thin trees and little structure.

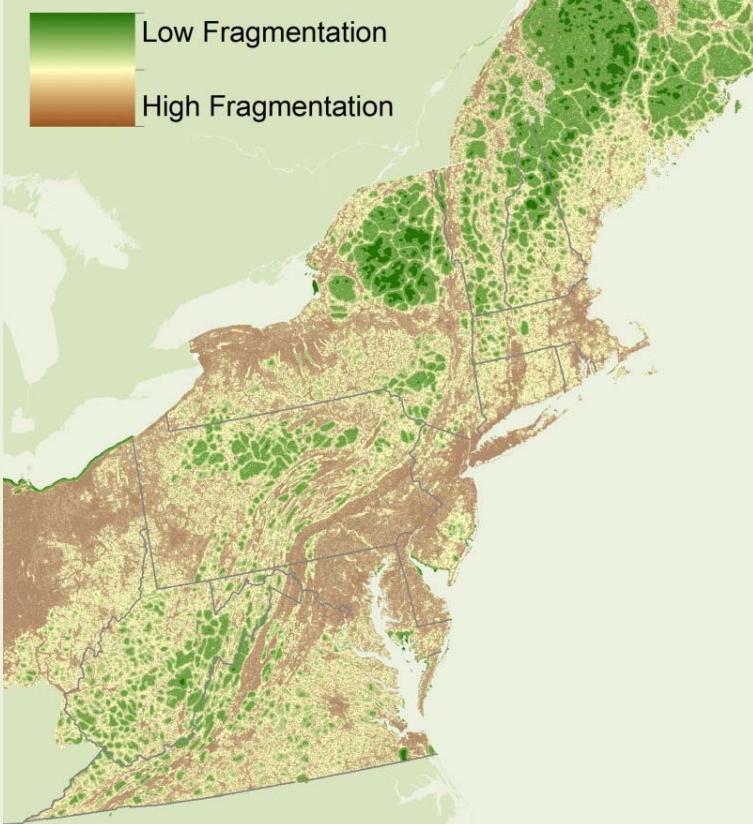
Underlying data developed by The Nature Conservancy's Eastern Science Office with support from the Northeast Association of Wildlife Agencies.

Fact sheet supported by
Sweet Water Trust
www.sweetwatertrust.org

For the full report and large maps go to:

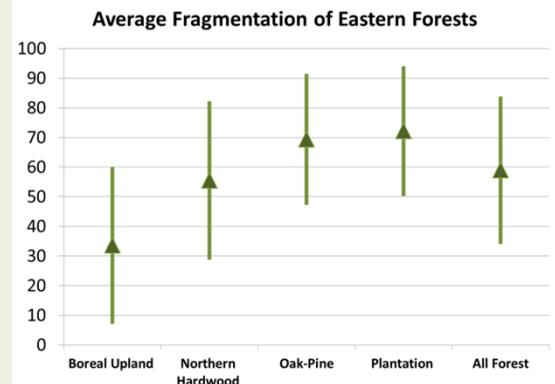
<http://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationByGeography/NorthAmerica/UnitedStates/edc/reportsdata/stateofnature>

Natural Land Fragmentation



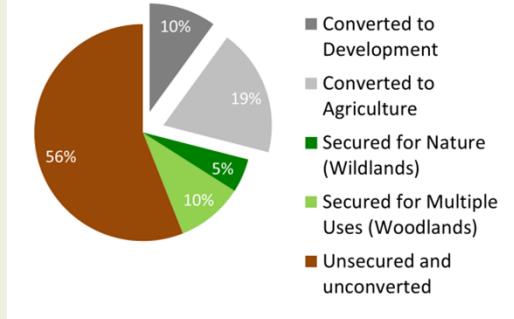
Connected Forests

Although trees have regrown in the Northeast, the forest is no longer one large connected system. Individual stands are often cut off from other stands by roads, development, or open fields. On a scale from "0" (seamlessly connected) to "100" (completely cut off) the average fragmentation of forest stands now scores "59," indicating a loss of over half their connectedness.

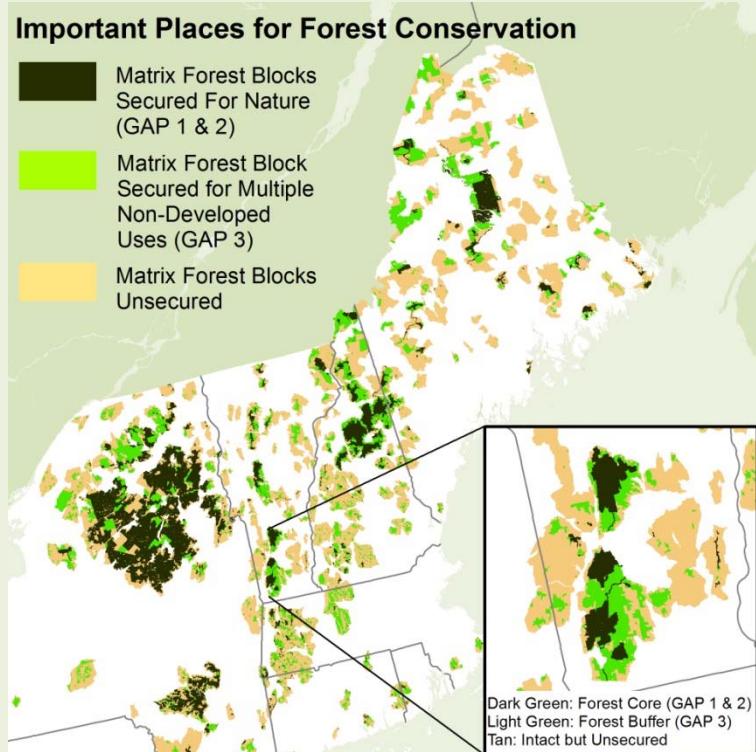


To offset trends in fragmentation and loss, citizens and conservation entities have focused on securing large tracts of forest still capable of functioning as a complete forest ecosystem.

Forest Loss and Securement



Important Places for Forest Conservation



Full map of Matrix Forest Blocks at
<http://www.conervationgateway.org/ConservationByGeography/NorthAmerica/UnitedStates/edc/reportsdata/stateofnature>

Cores and Buffers

The ownership and management of conservation forests by non-government entities has expanded. Conservation organizations have identified key places for conserving large forest tracts, known as Matrix Forest Blocks. The goal of these efforts is two-fold:

- **Large core areas:** secured for nature, where high quality forest habitat can fully develop.
- **Extensive buffer areas:** secured for multiple uses, maintaining forest cover around the cores through nature-friendly management.