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**Managing for Timber
and Wildlife on the
National Forests in
Alabama**



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Forest
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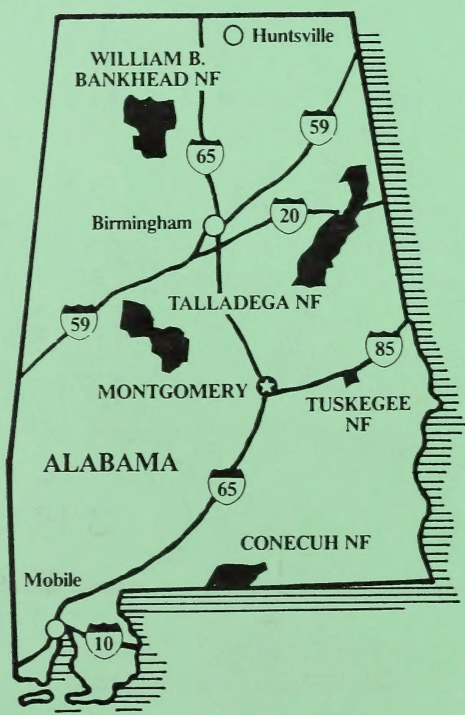


Southern
Region

United States Department of Agriculture

Your national forests are working forests! National forests provide lumber for building homes, hunting and recreation opportunities, watershed management, grazing for domestic livestock, and exploration for oil, gas and minerals.

National forests provide a wide spectrum of outdoor recreation. Campgrounds, picnic and swimming areas and extensive trail systems exist for your enjoyment. They provide areas for viewing nature, bird watching, or a scenic drive in your vehicle.





Also, many wilderness areas are within the national forests. In these areas trees are not cut, nor are motor vehicles allowed. Wildernesses are managed to restore and preserve the natural ecological conditions in the area, while providing visitors with primitive recreation experiences and opportunities for solitude. The Forest Service pioneered the National Wilderness System in 1924, by establishing the Gila Wilderness Area in Arizona.

Many people confuse the national forests with the national parks. National parks also provide outdoor recreation and wilderness experiences. Their main objective is conservation of the scenery, the natural and historic objects and the wildlife. In contrast, the national forests are managed for the use of **all** resources. Hunting, grazing and timber cutting coexist and complement each other when managed appropriately.

The mix of uses varies on each national forest and is determined through public input during the land management planning process, which occurs once every 10 years.

In Alabama, more than 650,000 acres make up the Talladega, Bankhead, Conecuh and Tuskegee National Forests. A small amount of grazing use is available on the Conecuh. There is exploration for oil and gas on the Conecuh and Talladega, with producing wells on the Conecuh. Timber management is practiced on all four forests.

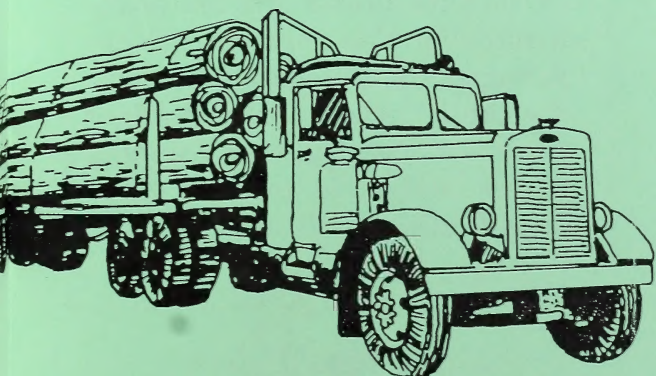
Recreation areas and trails exist on every forest. The Bankhead and Talladega forests have 33,476 acres in designated wilderness areas.

Management for timber and wildlife are inseparable. Wildlife habitat (home to wild animals) can be manipulated to benefit desirable species. Most game species benefit from openings created by cutting trees. Many more species thrive where variety is available. Newly created openings with their surrounding edge, old or mature trees and even over-mature trees benefit certain species.



The national forests can provide all of these needs while producing valuable crops of timber. Foresters and biologists, with help from the public, decide and provide the desired mix of the various habitats. Everyone, including the hunter, logger and recreationist, has different ideas. The decisions come through the land management planning process.

The four forests in Alabama annually produce an average of 75 million board feet of timber products. About half is from larger trees to be used for constructing buildings, furniture and utility poles. The remainder is pulpwood used by paper mills.



Your forests also produce abundant crops of deer, turkey, quail, rabbit, squirrel and other game species. Many species of nongame birds and other animals also live in the forests. Rare or endangered species include the red-cockaded woodpecker, flattened musk turtle, and seven species of mussels. Populations of the American alligator have recovered on the Conecuh and are no longer on the endangered list.

When endangered, threatened or sensitive species of plants or animals are found on the national forests, the Forest Service takes measures to protect them and enhance their habitat. The red-cockaded woodpecker is a good example. This bird requires large areas of pine trees for feeding and smaller areas of mature trees for nesting. Minimum age for tree harvest has been increased from 70-80 years to 120 years for much of the pine forests that are prime habitat for this rare bird. Other management practices to benefit the bird include leaving older trees for nesting and thinning timber stands to produce more ideal feeding conditions.





Foresters plan tree harvests with the wildlife in mind. They consider hardwood trees to provide food and dens, tree snags for woodpeckers, hawks, bluebirds and other species, and establishment of streamside zones to protect fish habitat and general water quality. The number, size and spacing of openings created when trees are harvested are coordinated with wildlife needs.

About 221,000 acres, or 38 percent, of land in timber management in the four forests in Alabama are in hardwood, or a mix of hardwood and pine trees. This is in addition to the hardwood "inclusions" often left in pine tree areas. Hardwood trees are important for food production, dens and nests, and to provide the variety that supports a greater diversity of species.

If your interest is bird watching, nature photography, hunting, or just enjoying time in the woods, your needs can be met on the four national forests in Alabama. At the same time, a supply of timber products helps the local economies, provides goods for consumers, revenue to the U.S. Treasury and enhances our wildlife resources.

For More Information:

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Office hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p. m., Monday through Friday. Additional information is available free of charge. Maps of all of the National Forests in Alabama are available for sale.

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