

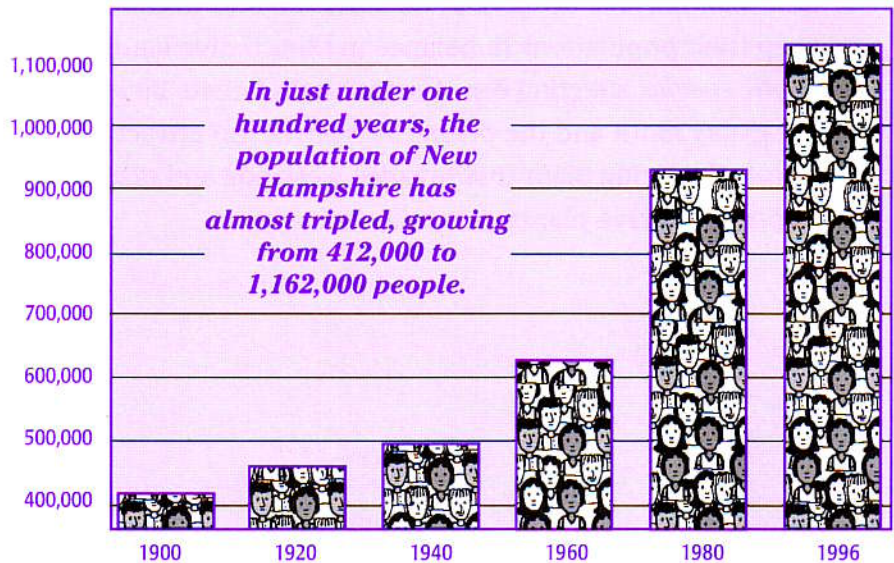
What Challenges Do Our Forests Face?

Our forests on the whole are healthy, resilient, and growing. However, many factors, some human-induced and others natural, affect our forests and their future.

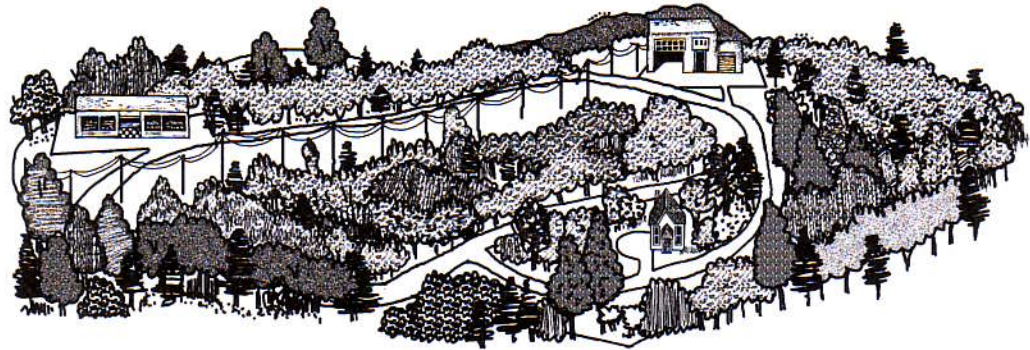
Population Growth

New Hampshire's population is growing rapidly and so is the demand for forest products. The population of the state has doubled from a half million in 1960 to well over a million people today. In addition, each of us uses more wood and paper products than our grandparents did.

As the population grows, so does demand to convert open spaces – including forests – into house lots, shopping malls, corporate parks, schools, and more. Approximately 13,000 acres of field and forest are converted to residential and industrial uses each year across the state. When the forest is fragmented – divided into smaller sites owned by many landowners – both people and wildlife are affected. Many animals and birds need large, uninterrupted stretches of land for habitat. In addition, when land is held by numerous different owners, it is more difficult to provide trails and access for recreation, to maintain clean air and water, and to harvest timber.



Example Of Fragmentation



Biological Diversity

The loss of biological diversity of New Hampshire is an emerging concern for forests. *Biodiversity* refers to the full range of living organisms that inhabit a particular ecosystem, including fields, forests, and bodies of water. Diversity within and among our forests allows us to enjoy and use them for many different purposes.

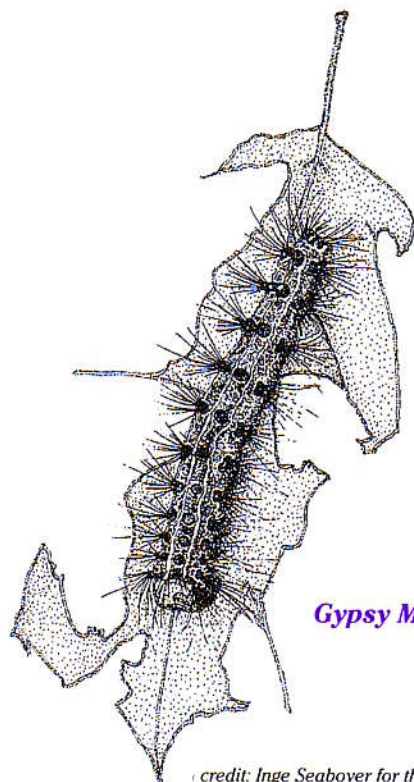
Human activity and natural processes both affect the biodiversity of the forest. Some forested habitats are rare as a result. Conservation organizations and state and federal agencies are just beginning to understand the complexity of biological diversity. Their findings are informing land management decisions on public and private forest land.



Exotic Species

Sometimes non-native, or exotic, species are introduced to forested ecosystems, and they can cause great damage. Some are especially aggressive and prolific. Often, their new habitats lack the predators and parasites that helped keep their populations in balance in their native lands.

Exotic species affecting New Hampshire's forests include the gypsy moth and the purple loosestrife, an attractive purple flowering plant that invades wetlands and displaces important native plants and animals.



Gypsy Moth

credit: Inge Seaboyer for the NH
Division of Forests & Lands

Question

Imagine you own 50 acres of forest land in a neighboring town. It provides rich habitat to many plants and animals, including one of the only known populations of a rare salamander. You have just received a very attractive offer to sell the land for an upscale housing development. What do you do?

To help interpret the information on this factsheet, turn to the *Project Learning Tree PreK-8 Activity Guide!*

PLT Activity #56: We Can Work It Out

When people decide how to use a particular piece of land, the decision can involve and affect many people in many ways. Therefore, groups must establish processes for planning and resolving conflicts about land use. In this activity, students develop a plan to address a land use issue.

Fun Fact



A French scientist brought the gypsy moth to Massachusetts in 1869. He attempted to interbreed gypsy moths with silkworms in an effort to develop a silkworm industry in the United States.