

Kid's KOrner

Future is bright for forest products industry

BY BORIS WEINTRAUB
National Geographic
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WASHINGTON — And now for some good news: There is one basic industry in the United States for which the long-term future is bright.

That is the forest products industry.

A recent study of wood use by the congressional Office of Technology Assessment concluded that, contrary to long-time predictions of scarcity, national timber supplies will be sufficient to meet domestic demand in the foreseeable future.

What's more, the study found that, given improvements in harvesting technology and better management of timberlands, the forest products industry has major opportunities to expand exports to the point where the United States would no longer be a net importer, of wood products.

And the study noted that this could occur without significant environmental damage and without major increases in the cutting of trees on public lands, by concentrating on timber production on private lands.

Lone Bright Spot

"If you look at the range of basic industries in this country, if you look at steel, automobiles, mining, the wood-using industry is perhaps the only one that has a bright future," says James W. Curlin, who directed the OTA study.

The United States consumes about a fourth of total world wood production, far more than any other nation. That wood goes into the two basic sections of the industry: solid wood, used primarily for construction, furniture, and a

host of smaller products from signs to coffins; and pulp and paper products.

But the United States is also the world's largest industrial source of forest products. The OTA found that American timber harvests would increase over the next three decades, and that better harvesting and processing, such as making use of defective wood now left on the site, and better management, such as fertilization and thinning, would help increase the timber supply.

In contrast, the other major wood producing areas—Japan, Canada, the Soviet Union, and western Europe—face dwindling supplies, difficulties in bringing timber to market, and climates that limit their ability to meet the expected 50 percent increase in world demand for forest products by the year 2000.

The biggest problem facing the American industry may be that it owns only 14 percent of the nation's timberlands. About 28 percent is publicly owned, including the 89 million acres in the national forest system, some of which may be commercially logged.

Small Private Owners

The remaining 58 percent is privately owned outside the industry and holds the highest potential for increased production. Much of that land is in small tracts of 100 acres or less, and the typical landowner bought it for reasons other than timber production: farming, recreation, or investment potential.

This aspect of the report has drawn fire from the National Forest Products Association, an industry federation, which is less optimistic.

"We recognize the opportunities, but OTA doesn't deal with the realities," says William J. Lange, the NFPA's manager of resource planning. "These lands aren't managed as well, and the report assumes a huge investment will be made that isn't being made."

Educating small landowners about the potential of their timberland could pay dividends, however.

"We find that once they know they can manage their land better, harvest a few trees, and pay their taxes or send their kid to college with the income, they do pretty well," says Larry Tombaugh, chairman of the forestry department at Michigan State University and head of a panel of experts that advised the OTA study team.

Tombaugh also is optimistic about the environmental prospects of increased production. With environmental awareness and careful management of forest lands, he says, "We can have our cake and eat it, too."

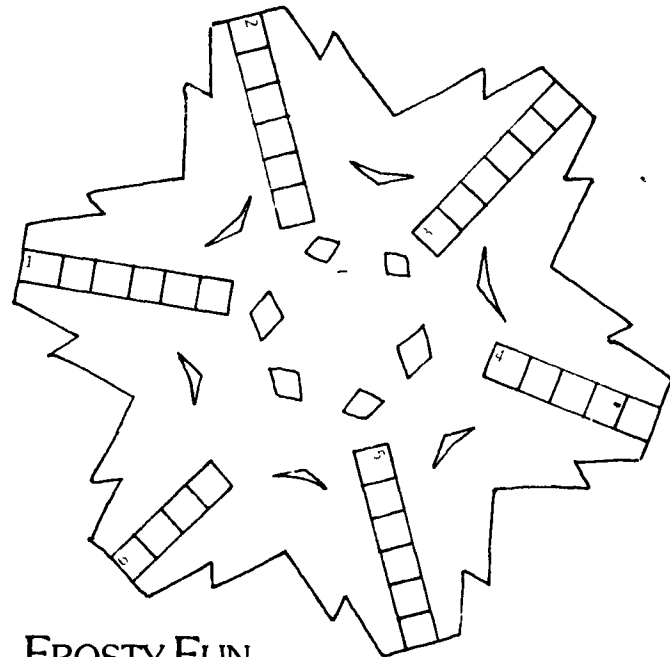
Environmentalists aren't so sure. Peter C. Kirby, director of forest management programs for the Wilderness Society and a member of the OTA panel, agrees with the report's emphasis on private lands, but cautions that private timber harvesters must meet environmental concerns, as do those who cut timber on public lands.

Striking a Bargain

"Many companies enter into cooperative relationships with private landowners, and much will depend on the environmental attitudes of the people they contract with," he says. "I'm talking about providing streamside buffers,

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Try this snowy puzzle



FROSTY FUN

by Celeste Kora

There's a word in each of this snowflake's points. The first letters spell a word when placed in the numbered spaces below.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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CLUES

- 1 A long tailed animal whose fur turns white to match the snow is a _____
- 2 When water freezes faster than it can drip it makes an _____
- 3 In winter the days are short and the _____ are long
- 4 Some _____ lose their leaves in fall
- 5 When people keep their houses cool in winter and wear sweaters inside they save _____
- 6 The amount of water in six inches of moist fallen snow is the same amount as in one inch of _____

Answers: 1. SKUNK 2. ICE 3. NIGHTS 4. TREES 5. HEAT 6. WATER

COLOR THIS!

- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1. BLACK | 6. PEACH |
| 2. RED | 7. GREEN |
| 3. YELLOW | 8. LT. BROWN |
| 4. BLUE | 9. LT. BLUE |
| 5. BROWN | 10. LT. GREEN |

ROBINSON CRUSOE WAS THE NAME OF THE CHARACTER IN THE BOOK BY DANIEL DEFOE. CRUSOE WAS MAROONED ON AN ISLAND FOR 28 YEARS BEFORE HE WAS RESCUED. DEFOE MODELED HIS CHARACTER AFTER A REAL LIFE SAILOR WHO WAS PUT OFF HIS SHIP BY A DISGRUNTLED CAPTAIN. THIS SAILOR STAYED ON AN ISLAND 4 YRS.



BLEND COLORS

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