



The Family Forest Resource

Karl Didier

Forestland Conservation Program Manager

karl.didier@dof.virginia.gov



Outline

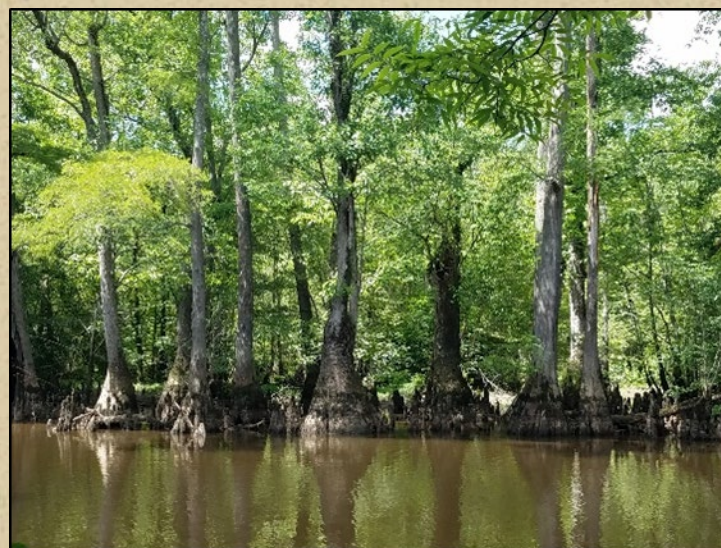
Set a little context:

- ◆ Overview of Virginia's forests & the benefits they provide
- ◆ Importance of family forest landowners
- ◆ Development & Fragmentation Trends
- ◆ How GenNEXT can help



Quiz!

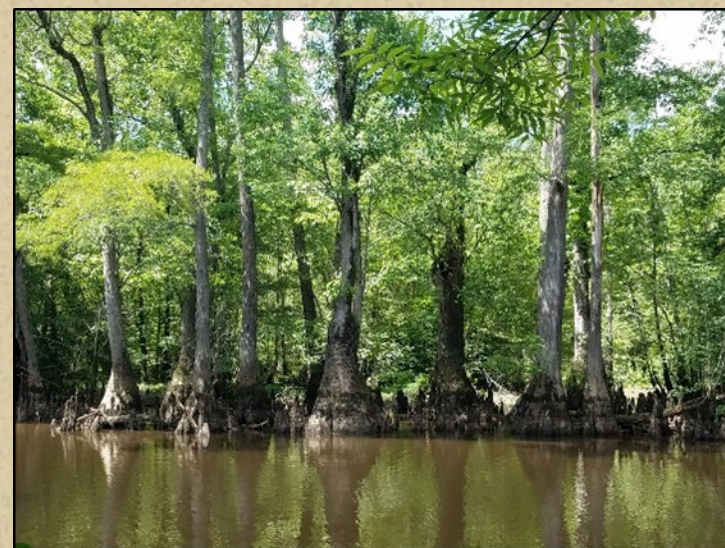
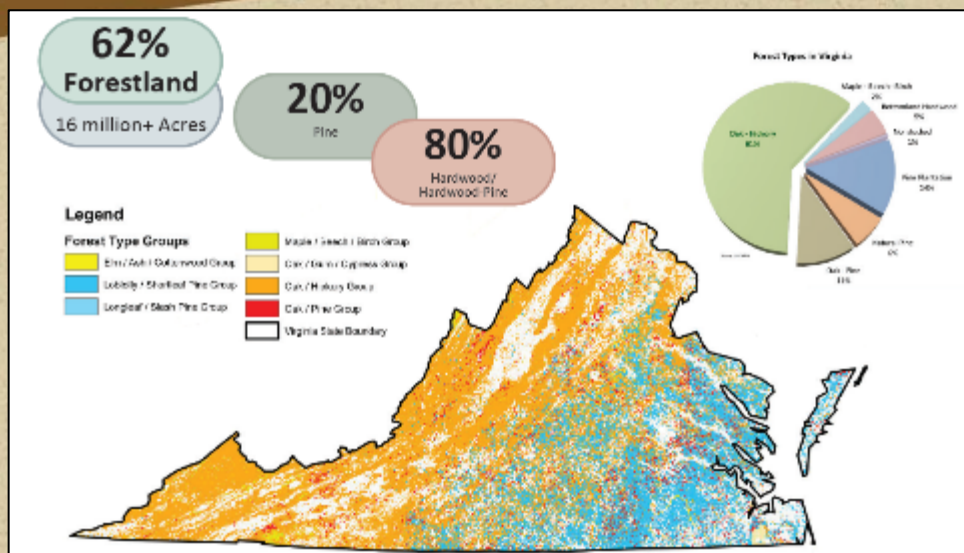
1. What % of Virginia is in forestland?







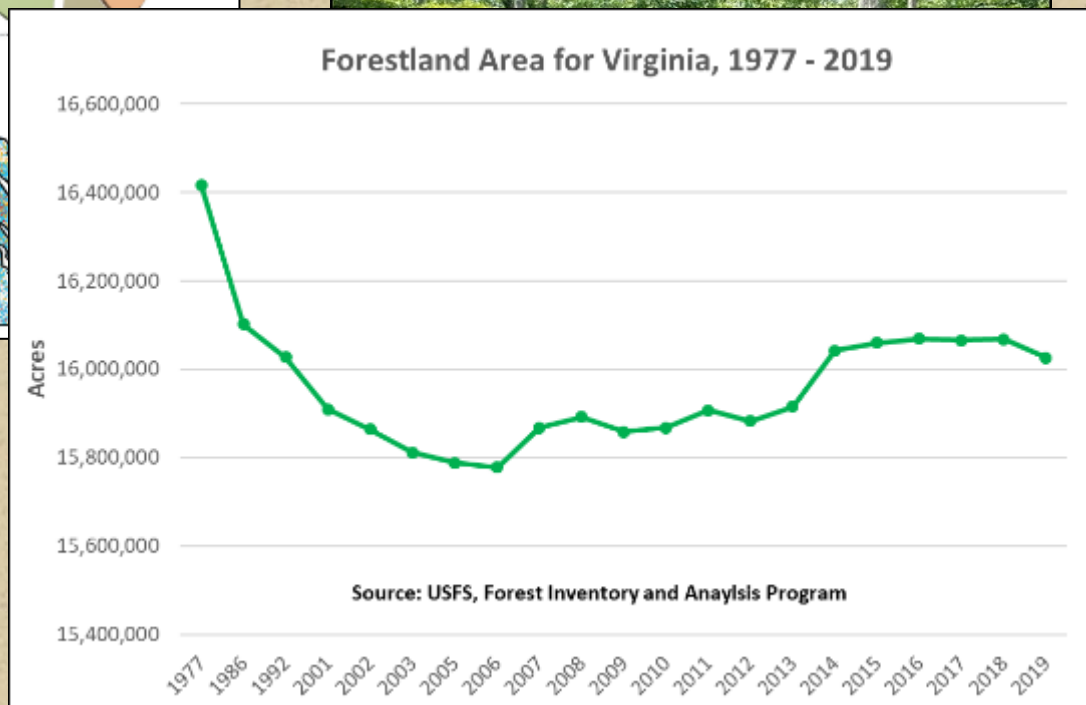
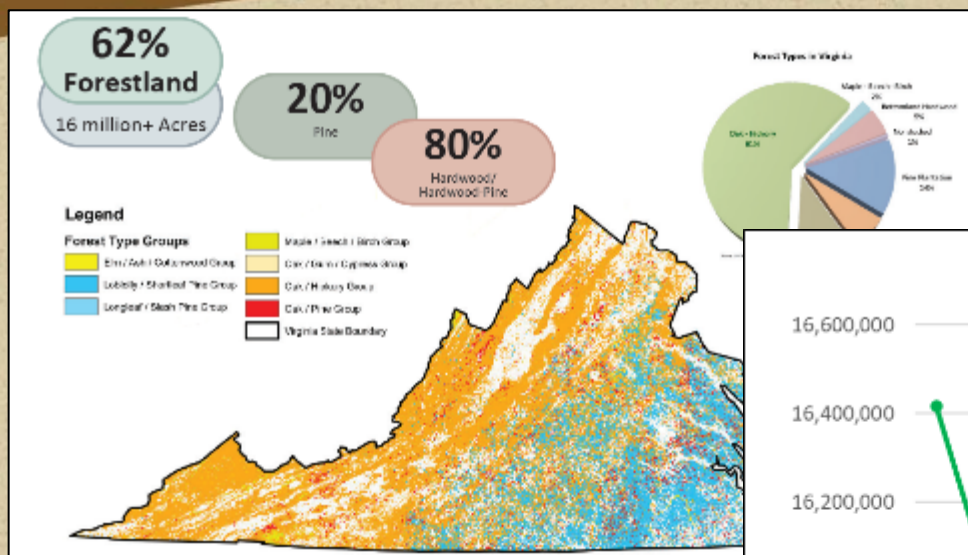
Quiz!



2. Has that % declined or increased over the past 1-2 decades?



Quiz!




Our goal– to keep it that way!



Value of Virginia's Forests

Economic Impact

- Forest industry is the largest industry (UVA 2022) 
 - \$23.6 Billion ~ 2.5% of GDP
- 108,451 Jobs
 - 1 in ~48 workers



The Economic Impacts of Agriculture and Forest Industries in Virginia UVA Weldon Cooper Center, Nov 2022



Environmental & Social Benefits

Quantifiable benefits:

■ Recreational impact

- \$2.4 Billion

■ Ecosystem services

- Clean water & air, climate regulation, wildlife...
- \$6.4 Billion

■ Non-quantifiable benefits:

- Sense of history & place, beauty...





Who is the primary steward of our forest lands?

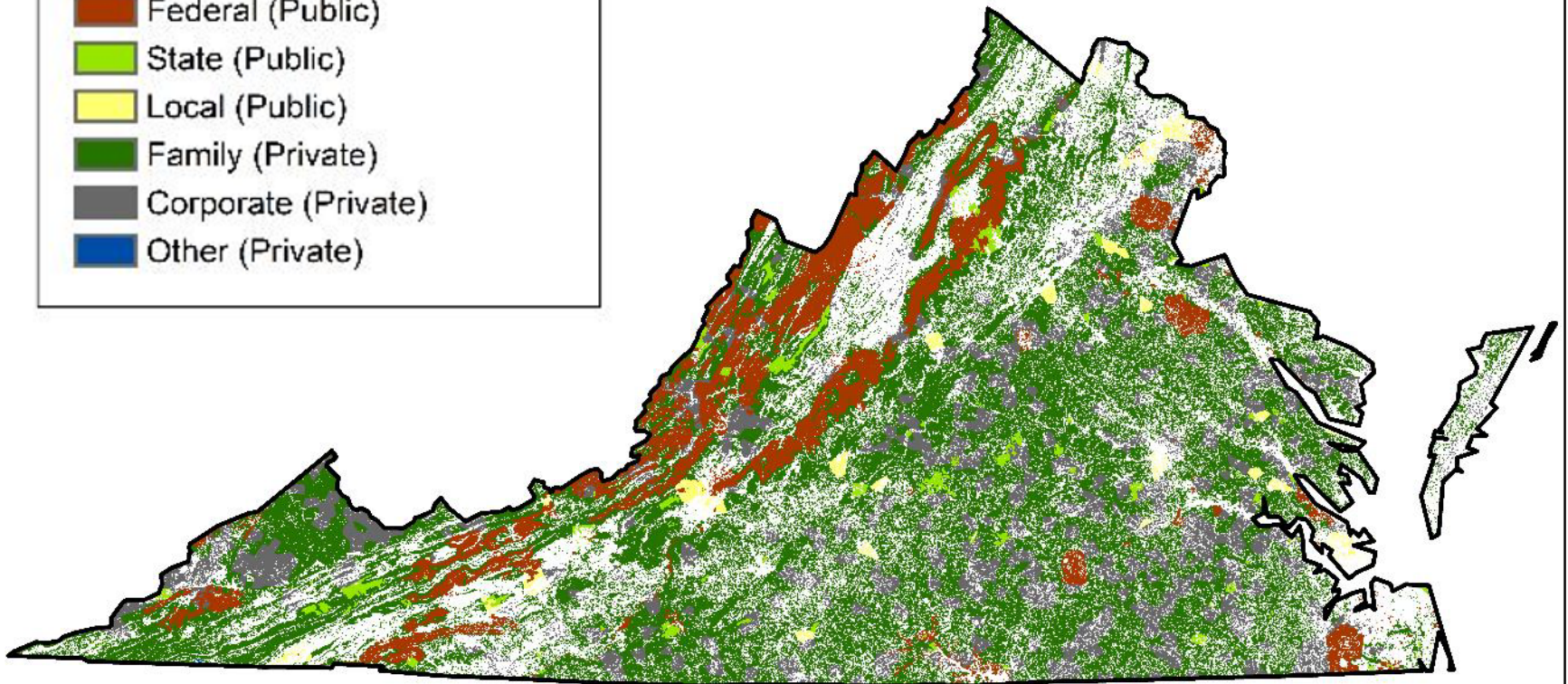
- A. The Federal Government
- B. The Virginia Department of Forestry
- C. Local Government
- D. Corporations
- E. Families

Forest Ownership in Virginia

Data Source: Hawes et al. 2014

Forest Ownership Type

- Federal (Public)
- State (Public)
- Local (Public)
- Family (Private)
- Corporate (Private)
- Other (Private)



- National Forest ~ 2 million of 16 million acres
- Public land ~ 3 million acres (18%)
- Family Forest Landowners ~ 10 million acres (63%) & 75% of the timber supply



Family Forest Landowners are the Key

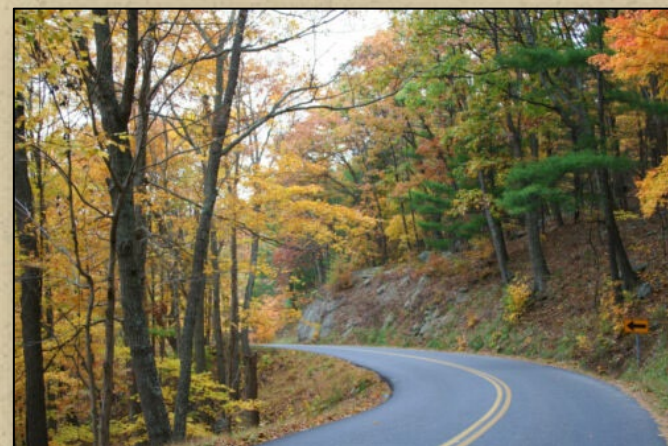
- Nearly 2/3rd's of Virginia's forest are privately owned
- ...By more than 500,000 private family owners like yourself
- You help keep our forests healthy & economy strong, for all 8.2 million Virginians





A crossroads for Family Forests

- Unprecedented moment of intergenerational transfer
 - ◆ Over 50% of family forest owners are over the age of 55
 - ◆ More than 25% are over the age of 65
 - ◆ In the next 30 years, ~70% of the forests will change hands (7 million acres)





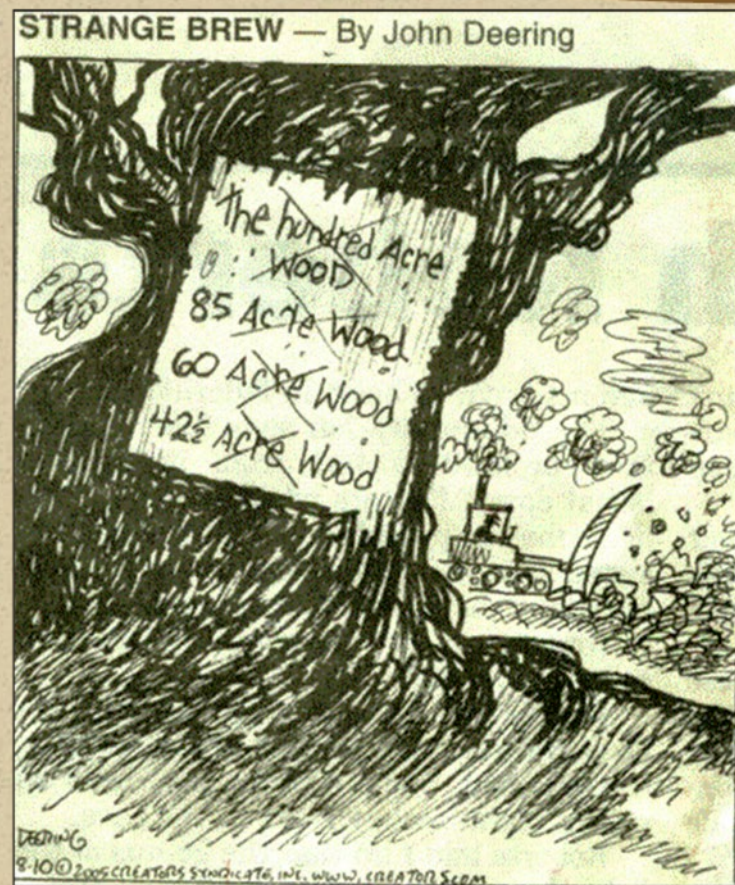
Intergenerational Transfer

- Point of highest vulnerability to:
 - ◆ Passing out of family ownership
 - ◆ Changes in land management that do not reflect the previous owner's goals
 - ◆ Division, conversion, & fragmentation



The challenge we face...

- Virginia's remaining family forestlands are highly parcelized & fragmented...
- ...and are becoming more so with every passing generation





Fragmentation of Family Forests

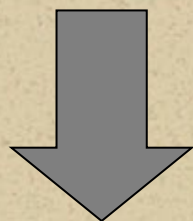
- 95% of family forests are less than 100 acres
- Average size
 - ◆ Parcel: 27 acres
 - ◆ Each owner owns less than 75 acres on average



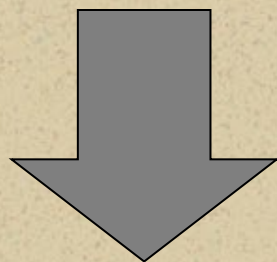


Conversion Progression

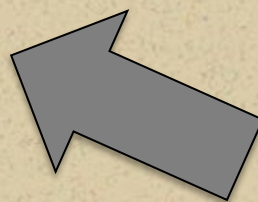
Parcelization



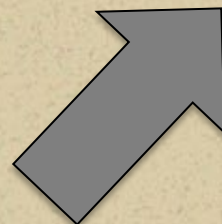
Fragmentation of ownership
& management



Forest Conversion
& Fragmentation

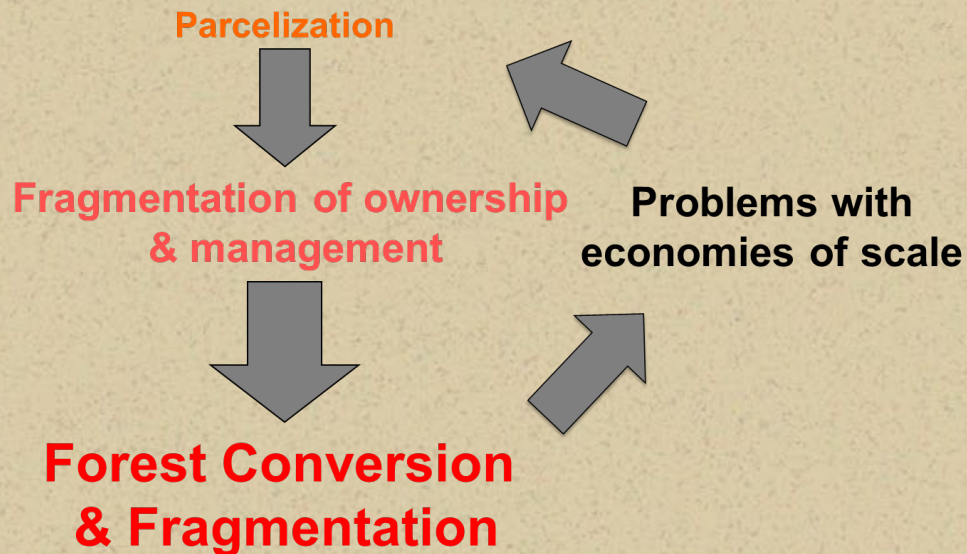


Problems with
economies of scale





Conversion Progression



- The economic & environmental benefits of woodland parcels tends to lessen as the parcels get smaller

- Gradual process, hard to notice
- Death by 1000 cuts
- Changes the character of rural areas



Graphic credit: USDA Forest Service



Conversion Progression

Parcelization



Fragmentation of ownership
& management



Forest Conversion
& Fragmentation



Problems with
economies of scale



■ Two biggest drivers:

- ◆ Poorly planned or executed estate disposal
- ◆ Increasing property taxes



The Generation NEXT Program

- Combating parcelization & loss of family forests
- By helping land owners plan for inter-generational transfer of rural lands
- Using conservation, legal, & financial tools



**Virginia
Cooperative
Extension**

Virginia Tech
Virginia State University

