

Forest Service seeks views on statewide assessment

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The Nebraska Forest Service has released a draft of its statewide assessment of Nebraska's forest resources and is inviting public comment through May 7.

The assessment is available on the [Nebraska Forest Service](#) Web site. Comments and suggestions can be emailed to Becky Erdkamp, Nebraska Forest Service education and outreach specialist, at rerdkamp2@unl.edu.

"This is the first time we have conducted a comprehensive assessment of Nebraska's forest resources," said Scott Josiah, director of the Nebraska Forest Service. "It's a unique opportunity to develop long-term strategic goals for managing the state's rural and community forests."

Trees and forests across Nebraska are experiencing significant challenges. Tree mortality is increasing due to disease and invasive pests, wildfires are increasing in size and intensity, ecosystems are struggling to adapt to climate change disturbances and forest land is being permanently converted to non-forest use.

The assessment details Nebraska's diverse tree and forest landscapes, threats from invasive pests, woody biomass as an energy source, wildland fire dangers and the forest products industry.

The Nebraska Forest Service will use the assessment to target programs and develop competitive proposals for addressing priority landscape areas and issues.

The 2008 Farm Bill provided new guidance on identifying and prioritizing national, regional and state forest management goals and mandated that each state assess its forest conditions. The state assessments will be used by the U.S. Forest Service to "redesign" the national plan for managing the country's forest resources.