

# The Changing Forest

Humans have a long history of manipulating the forest. Native Americans regularly burned the forest to improve hunting, and early settlers cleared forests to make way for farm fields. Wisconsin's forests were used to build the cities of the Midwest at the turn of the century as the state's forest lands were cut and burned. Through the foresight of many natural resource professionals, lawmakers, and citizens, Wisconsin's forests are once again abundant, covering 46 percent (16 million acres) of the state today.

Throughout the century, education and research have been critical components of our understanding forest ecosystems. The profession of forestry in the U.S. celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2000. As foresters learn more about how the forest ecosystem operates, how to better use forest products, how the social demands on the forest interact, and the thousands of other areas of forestry research, they apply their new knowledge to the forests. The art and science of forest management are constantly changing along with the resource itself.

Although your students may think that a forest looks the same each time they visit it, forests are constantly changing. Some are microscopic changes on the forest floor, others are dramatic changes at the landscape level. Some changes are created by nature (insects and diseases, for example), others by humans (harvesting, planting, and introduction of exotics). Some are fast (windstorms and forest fires), while others happen more slowly (succession of forest from one type to another).

Activities in this section that help convey the concept of systemic change to your students include:

**“A Tree-rif-ic Math Activity”**

**“Local Tree Identification Guide”**

**“School Grounds Timeline”**

**“Visiting My Schoolyard Tree”**

**“Forest Field Notes”**

**“Tree Rings”**

**“Watch Out for Exotic and Invasive Species in Wisconsin's Forests”**

**“Forest Community”**

**“Pollination”**

**“Energy in the Ecosystem”**