

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Abiotic:** A nonliving factor or element in the environment, such as light, water, heat, rock, or gases.

**Active management:** Attaining desired forest objectives to enable future conditions using silvicultural operations and forest management practices.

**Aquatic habitat:** An area in the environment where water is the principal medium and species are adapted to aquatic conditions.

**Biological diversity, Biodiversity:** The variety and abundance of life forms, processes, functions, and structures of plants, animals, and other living organisms. The biodiversity of species, communities, gene pools, and ecosystems extends from local to regional to global spatial scales.

**Biome:** A complex of communities characterized by a distinctive type of vegetation and maintained under the particular climatic conditions of the region.

**Biotic:** An environmental factor related to or produced by living organisms.

**Boreal forest:** The northernmost broad band of mixed coniferous and deciduous trees that stretches across northern North America, Europe, and Asia.

**Climate change:** A change in the state of the climate that can be identified (through statistically significant data) by changes in the mean and/or variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. Climate change may be due to natural processes, but current climate change is being driven by persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere and in land use.

**Conifer:** A tree that bears its seeds in a cone and is generally evergreen.

**Crown:** The top branches of a tree.

**Deciduous:** Tree that has leaves or needles that die and fall off after one growing season.

**Decomposer:** A plant or organism that feeds on dead material and causes its mechanical or chemical breakdown.

**Ecosystem:** The interacting system of a biological community and its nonliving environment; also, the place where these interactions occur.

**Ecosystem services:** Components of nature that may be directly enjoyed, consumed, or used to yield human well-being.

**Evapotranspiration:** The process by which water is transferred from the land to the atmosphere by evaporation from the soil and other surfaces and by transpiration from plants.

**Evergreen:** A tree that retains its green leaves, needles, or scales during the winter and for more than two growing seasons.

**Forest:** An ecosystem characterized by extensive tree cover usually consisting of stands varying in characteristics such as species, structure, composition, age class, and commonly including streams, fish, and wildlife. They are commonly managed to sustain multiple products, services and values.

**Forest cover:** The dominant tree species or combination of tree species present. Forests can be classified according to their cover type.

**Forest health:** The perceived condition of a forest based on its age, structure, composition, function, vigor, presence of unusual levels of insects or disease, and resilience to disturbance.

**Forest management:** The practical application of scientific, economic, and social principles to the administration of a forest.

**Forest product:** Any item or material derived from forests for commercial use, such as lumber, paper, mushrooms or forage for livestock.

**Forestry:** The profession embracing the science, art and practice of creating, managing, using and conserving forests and associated resources for human benefit and in a sustainable manner to meet desired goals, needs and values.

**Habitat:** (1) A unit area of environment. (2) The place, natural or otherwise, described by its climate, food, cover, and water, where an individual or population of organisms normally lives and develops.

**Passive management:** Managing a forest area by letting nature take its course.

**Perennial:** A plant that lives for several years, and that usually produces seeds each year after reaching maturity.

**Photosynthesis:** The process by which green plants manufacture simple sugars in the presence of sunlight, carbon dioxide and water.

**Producer:** An organism that synthesizes organic compounds from inorganic substances via photosynthesis (by green plants) or chemosynthesis (by anaerobic bacteria).

**Reforestation:** The reestablishment of forest cover either naturally or by seeding or planting of seedlings.

**Renewable resource:** A naturally occurring raw material or form of energy that has the capacity to replenish itself through ecological cycles and sound management practices.

**Riparian zone:** The area that surrounds wetlands, lakes, rivers, or streams, forming a transition zone between aquatic and upland habitats.

**Silviculture:** The art and science of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, health, and quality of forests and woodlands to meet the diverse needs and values of landowners and society on a sustainable basis.

**Stand:** A contiguous group of trees that are relatively uniform in age, composition, and structure, and that are growing on a similarly uniform site. The “stand” is a typical scale for forest management planning of sufficiently uniform quality.

**Succession:** The gradual replacement of one community by another.

**Sustainable forestry:** To meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by practicing a land stewardship ethic that integrates reforestation and the managing, growing, nurturing, and harvesting of trees for useful products and ecosystem services such as the conservation of soil, air and water quality, carbon, biological diversity, wildlife and aquatic habitats, recreation and aesthetics.

**Timber:** Trees of commercial size and quality suitable for sawing into lumber.

**Timber harvest:** Removal of trees from a forest to restore ecological health or to obtain income from the wood products.

**Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK):** The knowledge base learned and shared by indigenous and local peoples over many hundreds of years through direct contact with the environment.

**Tree cover:** The degree to which trees dominate a given geography, often expressed as a percentage of the spatial extent (eg. “the tree cover in that urban space was nearly 40%”).

**Tropical forest:** A forest that grows in tropical climates with high year-round temperatures and generally high annual rainfall.

**Urban forest:** The total woodlands, groups of trees, and individual trees located in an urban area, including forests, street trees, and trees in parks and gardens.

**Wilderness:** (1) a natural environment that has not been significantly modified by human activities; (2) land designated by the U.S. Congress for preservation and protection in its natural condition.

