

## Southern Forests for the Future: Glossary of Key Terms

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**Biodiversity** is the variability among living organisms within species, between species, and between ecosystems.

**Broadleaf** plants have relatively broad rather than needle-like or scale-like leaves. Examples of broadleaf trees in the South include maples, oaks, hickories, and gums. Most broadleaf trees are also deciduous—they lose their leaves in winter—but there are exceptions, such as the live oak, which keeps its leaves virtually throughout the year, shedding them only immediately prior to leaf-out in the spring.

**Carbon dioxide equivalent** is the universal unit of measurement used to indicate the global warming potential of greenhouse gases.

**Carbon sequestration** is the uptake and storage of carbon dioxide. It can occur in forest plants, plant roots, and soil.

A **conifer** is a tree that bears its seeds in cones and has needle-like leaves. Examples of coniferous trees in the South are loblolly and longleaf pine, red cedar, hemlock, and balsam fir. Typically, coniferous trees are also evergreen—they keep their leaves year-round—although some species of coniferous trees, such as the bald cypress, lose their leaves in the winter.

**Conversion** refers to the transformation of land cover from one type to another; for example, from forest to row crops.

A **cubic foot** is the volume of a cube with sides of one foot (0.3048 meter) in length.

**Deciduous** trees lose all of their leaves at the end of the growing season for the winter, and grow new leaves in the spring. In the South, most deciduous trees are also broadleaf trees, such as oaks, maples, hickories, and gums. One coniferous species that is also deciduous is the bald cypress.

**Direct drivers** are factors—natural or human-induced—that cause changes in an ecosystem and affect its ability to supply ecosystem services. Direct drivers include changes in land use or land cover, overconsumption of an ecosystem's services, climate change, pollution, and invasive species.

An **ecosystem** is a dynamic complex of communities of plants, animals, and other organisms interacting with their non-living environment as a functional unit. Examples of ecosystems include deserts, coral reefs, wetlands, rain forests, temperate forests, grasslands, urban parks, and cultivated farmlands. Ecosystems can be relatively undisturbed by people, such as virgin rain forests, or can be extensively modified by human activity, such as farms.

**Endemism** is the ecological state of being indigenous (native) to a particular restricted geographic location. A species that is endemic to a place is found only in that area.

**Evergreen** trees have leaves that persist year round, staying green throughout the winter. Most evergreen trees in the South are also coniferous, such as cedars, pines, and firs. In the deep South, some broadleaf trees, such as the live oak, are also evergreen.

**Fragmentation** is the process by which a large expanse of habitat is transformed into a number of smaller patches of smaller total area, isolated from each other by a matrix of habitats unlike the original.

**Greenhouse gases** are gases in an atmosphere that absorb and emit radiation within the thermal infrared range. This process is the fundamental cause of the greenhouse effect. Major greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and water vapor. Greenhouse gases greatly affect the temperature of the earth; without them, earth's surface would be on average about 33°C (59°F) colder than at present. Human activities since the start of the industrial era around 1750 have increased the levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

**Hardwood** trees are deciduous trees—such as hickories, maples, and oaks—with wood that tends to be harder and denser than that of softwoods.

**Indirect drivers** are factors that contribute to changes in direct drivers of ecosystem change. Indirect drivers could be governmental (policies, regulations, subsidies, and incentives), demographic (population growth, decline, and distribution), economic (globalization and markets), technological (new technologies), or cultural and religious (spiritual values, lifestyle decisions, and choices about what and how much to consume).

**Measures** are incentives, markets, and practices that are implemented to achieve a particular aspired outcome, such as the long-term, sustainable management of forests.

**Pulpwood** is roundwood, whole-tree chips, or wood residues used for the production of wood pulp for paper and paper products.

**Roundwood** refers to a length of cut tree such as a log, usually with a round cross-section, with or without bark.

**Saw logs** are trees or logs cut from trees with minimum diameter and length and with stem quality suitable for conversion to lumber.

A **secondary forest** is a forest or woodland area that has regenerated after a major disturbance such as fire, insect infestation, large-scale timber harvest, or clearing for agriculture.

**Softwood** trees are coniferous trees—such as pines, firs, and cedar—with wood that tends to be softer and less dense than that of hardwoods.

***The South*** is the area comprised of the thirteen U.S. states in the U.S. Forest Service's Southern Region

***Species richness*** is a measure of the number of different species present within a given area.

***Suburban encroachment*** (sometimes called “sprawl”) describes relatively low-density suburban development (defined in this publication as one housing unit per 1.7–10 acres), either at the suburban/rural fringe or in relatively isolated locations in otherwise undeveloped areas.

***Temperate forests*** are forests located in regions in which the average temperature is  $\pm 50^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $10^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) for two to four months of the year.

***Veneer*** is a thin sheet of wood of uniform thickness, produced by rotary cutting (peeling) or slicing, and sometimes by sawing. It is often used in furniture.

A ***virgin forest*** (sometimes called “primary forest”) is an undisturbed natural forest, virtually uninfluenced by human activities, and usually containing old-growth trees if the site has been free of natural disturbances such as hurricanes.

A ***watershed*** is the area of land drained by a single stream, river, or drainage network.

***Wildland-urban interface***: is an area where increased human influence and land use conversion are changing natural resource goods, services, and management. This definition is based on a natural resource perspective; other definitions can be based on geographical, sociopolitical, biophysical, and fire perspectives.