



# ARE WOOD PRODUCTS COMPANIES REALLY HELPING FORESTS?



OUR FORESTS. OUR STRENGTH.

Stand4Forests Report Series

If you speak to a logger, forester, or executive at a paper company, they are quick to tell you that we need to create wood products to keep our forests healthy. They say that cutting trees down somehow keeps forests around. However, wood products companies only care about the ability of forests to provide a steady supply of wood. **In reality, our forests in the South are suffering from extreme logging practices.**

**Here's the truth:**

- Logging our forests destroys their ability to give us clean water, clean air, homes for wildlife, and protection from floods.
- Increasing wood products has come at the expense of the health of our forests and communities.
- Natural forests are being replaced with “fake forests” -- plantations which aren't able to provide as much clean water, clean air, and other benefits.

In conclusion, we need new policies designed to reduce logging and leave more forests standing.

**MYTH:** Southern forests are healthy.

**TRUTH:** Natural forests should be growing —but aren't.

Our forests have grown by less than 2% in the last 60 years.<sup>12</sup> Now, more than ever, our forests are likely to be “fake” forests -- pine plantations that don't provide any of the benefits that a natural forest does. The forest products industry thinks that this is okay because they value profits above all else. If our forests had continued growing as they were in 1964, there would be 25 million more acres of forests in the South. Instead, forest growth in the US South has been hampered by overzealous logging.

**TRUTH:** Forest health is declining in the US South, and logging is to blame.

**The wood products industry says that forests are doing great in the South, but measures of health have declined.** In the last sixty years, forty million acres of natural forests have been replaced with fake forests.<sup>12</sup> There have been species extinctions,<sup>3</sup> invasions by harmful pests,<sup>4</sup> and more roads and houses intersecting our forests than ever before.<sup>5</sup>

There are three separate studies that blame logging for these issues with forests. The US Fish & Wildlife Service acknowledged in their last report that logging was the main cause of wetland forest loss in the US.<sup>6</sup> Another study found that the main cause of tree cover loss in the United States was driven by logging (see map).<sup>7</sup> And, a final study found that the vast majority of greenhouse gas emissions from forests came from logging.<sup>8</sup>

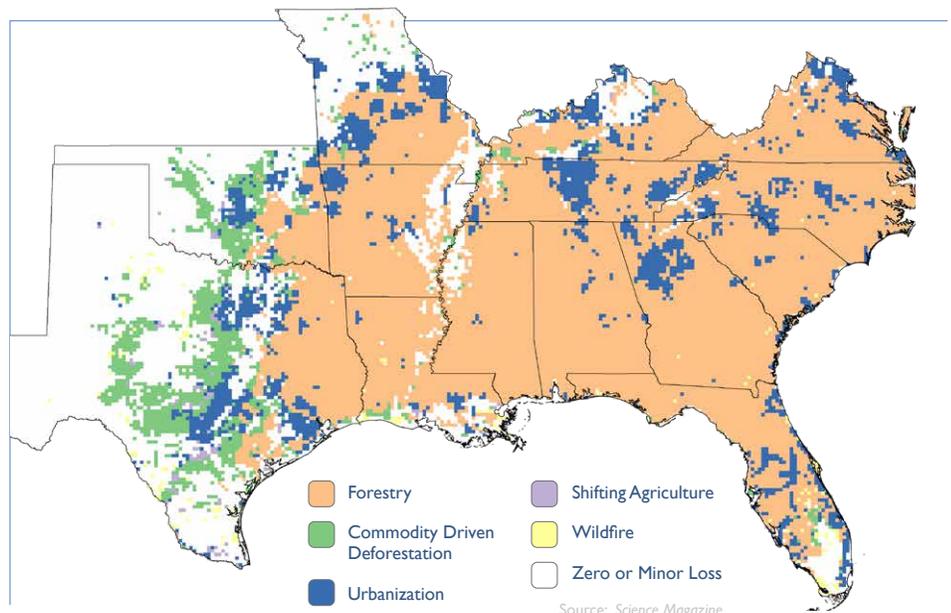
Some people will say that expanding cities are to blame for forest losses. However, across the world, only a small fraction of forest loss is due to expanding cities.<sup>7</sup> Logging is the dominant cause of carbon loss, deforestation, and degradation in the United States.<sup>6,8,9</sup>

**TRUTH:** The wood products industry uses misleading statistics to tell us that forests are healthy.

The wood products industry says that forests are growing in the US South because they measure growing stock -- the amount of usable wood that comes out of a tree. They're not measuring forests at all! They're measuring the number of straight, young trees that can be cut down for timber.

When you think of forests in this way, you don't think about the way that they clean water, clean air, provide homes for wildlife, or keep harmful greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere. **Extensive logging destroys all of these good things that forests provide.**<sup>35</sup> One study found that the global wood products trade degrades the quality of forests by \$1.5 trillion dollars.<sup>10</sup> Any “growth” touted by the wood products industry probably means that more natural forests have been destroyed and replaced with fake ones.<sup>2</sup>

**CAUSES OF FOREST LOSS IN THE US SOUTH**



**MYTH:** Fake forests are valuable forests.

**TRUTH:** Fake forests are “corn fields” of trees.

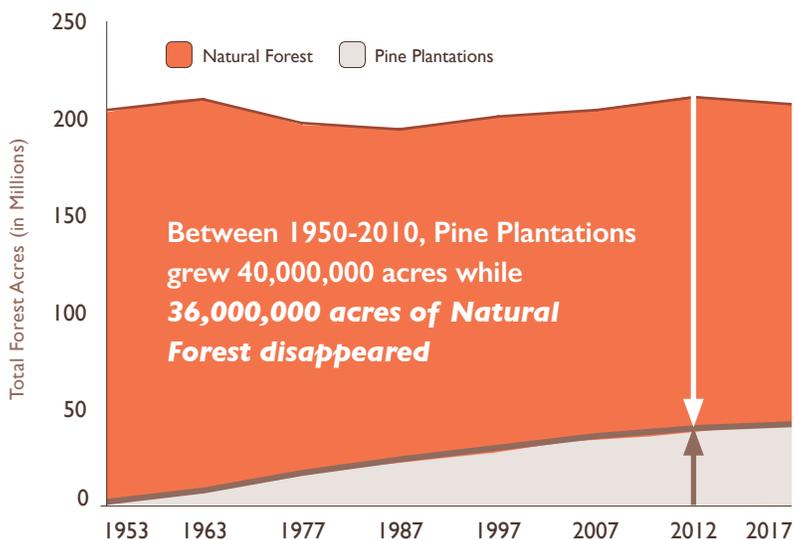
Fake forests, or plantations, are agricultural lands that don't provide as much benefit as natural forests do.<sup>11,12</sup> Fake forests only absorb about half of the greenhouse gases that a natural forest does,<sup>13-15</sup> don't provide homes for many animal species,<sup>16</sup> and don't clean water as well as natural forests.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, many people believe that the only valuable thing that comes out of a forest is money. They don't think about the clean water, clean air, or homes for wildlife. To make it worse, when a fake forest is logged, their ability to clean water, clean air, and provide other benefits is wiped out for many years.

**TRUTH:** Natural forests are being replaced at an alarming rate.

Because forests haven't grown in the South, we know that land for “fake forests” has come mostly from destroying natural forests. In 64 years, the South lost 37 million acres of natural forests, and gained 42 million in fake forests.

Some companies recognize the issue of natural forest destruction for fake forests. Georgia Pacific, a paper company, has agreed to not take wood from fake forests that were hardwood forests before 2008.<sup>[18]</sup> But other companies have not yet stepped up. There have been multiple instances of natural forest destruction for fake forests in recent years, especially on private lands that provide wood to Enviva, a wood pellet company.<sup>19</sup>

#### LOSS OF NATURAL FORESTS IN THE US SOUTH



**TRUTH:** The wood products industry thinks that fake forests are good enough.

The wood products industry lumps fake forests in with natural forests whenever they talk about the benefits of forests. However, fake forests just don't provide the value that natural forests do. One study found that fake forests only provided half the amount of water that natural forests did.<sup>20</sup> Other studies have found that fake forests just don't provide good homes for rare wildlife.<sup>12,16</sup>

The wood products industry tries to get laws passed that provide subsidies to landowners for their fake forests.<sup>21,22</sup> They're sneaky: even laws focused on “conservation” or “forest health” often favor fake forests over natural forests, by focusing grant money on things like replanting, pesticide application, and thinning -- none of these activities need to occur in a natural forest.



#### WHAT MAKES A HEALTHY FOREST?

We believe healthy forests:

- Are growing in size over time
- Have a lot of species and places for them to live
- Are not “fake” forests made up of just planted pine trees
- Are older, and have the same species that used to be there
- Don't have a lot of diseases or pests

## TRUTH: Fake forests don't offset enough greenhouse gases.

The wood products industry claims that fake forests are valuable for greenhouse gas storage even after they're logged. But carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas stored by trees, is stored in the trunks, roots, and leaves of trees. If a forest is logged, the greenhouse gases will end up in the atmosphere soon after. 86% of the carbon from a logged forest will be in the atmosphere after 100 years.<sup>23</sup> Doing this over and over again makes it worse -- once a forest is logged, the new forest that grows will store just half of the carbon that an unlogged forest will.<sup>13</sup>

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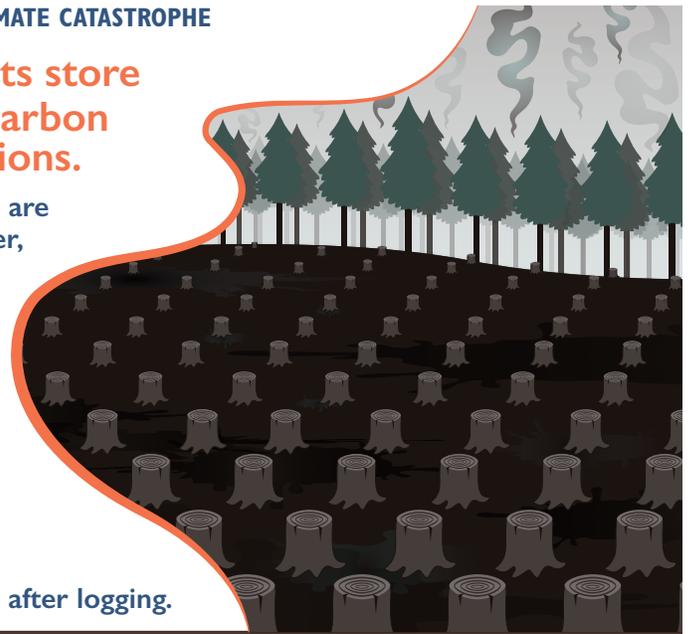
## PLANTATIONS: A CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

### Native forests store 50% more carbon than plantations.

When plantations are cut down for paper, lumber, and pellets, it creates carbon sequestration

# DEAD ZONES

for up to 13 years after logging.



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**ABOUT DOGWOOD ALLIANCE** • Dogwood Alliance mobilizes diverse voices to protect Southern forests and communities from destructive industrial logging. For over 20 years, Dogwood Alliance has worked with diverse communities, partner organizations and decision-makers to protect Southern forests across 14 states. They do this through community and grassroots organizing, holding corporations and governments accountable and working to conserve millions of acres of Southern forests.