FOR 124

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Forest Resource Information on the Internet: Connecting to Today's On-line Resources[1]

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In 1997 the University of Florida School of Forest Resources and Conservation (SFRC) published *Forest Resource Information on the Internet*, which provided detailed information about the Internet: its history, structure, and how to use it. It also provided a sample of forest resource Web sites, with emphasis on the SFRC's Extension Web site. This publication replaces the 1997 document and provides updated information on some of the related technology and the latest forest resource Web sites available. These regional and national resources can serve as a springboard to a wide variety of natural resource information and programs.

Software

You will need an operating system that has the standard Internet communication protocol program (TCP/IP stack is included in most McIntosh™ and Microsoft™ operating systems) and a Web browser. Internet Explorer™, Mozilla™, and Safari™ are popular browsers that retrieve Web page files from Web servers and interpret the hypertext markup language (html) or other code to display information and images. Browsers will also allow you to print and download documents and graphics. The Adobe Acrobat Reader™ is the tool most commonly used to display on-line documents in a read-only, print-friendly format. This software is usually available for free download where print-on-demand format (pdf) documents are provided on the Web. As always, respect copyrighted material and bookmark, or store in your file of favorite sites, the uniform resource locators (URLs), or Web addresses, of useful Web sites so you can return to them with a simple click of the mouse.

Plugging In

As the Internet grows in size and popularity so do the number of ways to connect. Telephone lines, television cables, and satellite are the means by which most individuals are using the Internet. The table in the appendix of this publication briefly summarizes these technologies and their approximate speeds and costs. Note that with all the graphics, media and information available on the Internet today, it is almost a requirement to have a high-speed connection (digital subscriber line (DSL) or better). Modems do

1. This document is FOR 124 and replaces the 1997 document, Forest Resource Information Available on the Internet, to provide updated information on some of the related technology and the latest forest resource Web sites available; one of a series of the School of Forest Resources and Conservation, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. First published: August 2007.

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not have the capacity to allow the user to load all the data contained in audio and video files from the Web.

Forest Resources Information on the World Wide Web

Today the Web is packed with natural resource information so it is helpful to have a few centrally organized Web sites bookmarked to aid in your search. The resources introduced here, in alphabetical order, are good starting points for looking for more specific information and assistance.

Florida Division of Forestry http://www.fl-dof.com/: this site has grown into a very useful resource for those seeking forestry information in Florida. Major sections include conservation and management, the latest Silviculture Best Management Practices, fire and forest protection, recreation, and landowner assistance.

- **Your Forest Managed** http://www.yourforestmanaged.com/: a new section of the Division's Web site, this section informs private forestland owners and citizens about the importance of forests and forest management. It contains a wealth of information on cost-sharing and education programs, pest and disease control, healthy harvest and planting practices, and many other useful topics.

Forest Encyclopedia Network http://www.forestencyclopedia.net/: provides natural resource professionals and the public the scientific knowledge and tools they need to achieve their objectives.The Network is designed to connect scientific results, conclusions, and impacts with management needs and issues.As of 2007, major sections of the Forest Encyclopedia include fire science, forest science, Appalachian forest ecosystems, bioenergy resources, and environmental threats, with more to come in the future.

Forestry Index http://www.forestryindex.net/: a useful index of natural resource Web pages organized by topic. This site also has a search engine that allows users to find Web pages on specific subjects.

Forest Productivity.net http://www.forestproductivity.net/: provides forestland managers with the most current, unbiased, science-based, forest productivity information available in support of best management decisions on forestlands. A key objective of the website is to equip and enable natural resource managers to make better, cost-effective forest management decisions to optimize forest productivity.

Forestry USA.com http://www.forestryusa.com/: is a new Web site on forests and forestry in country-regionplaceAmerica. It provides access to the Internet sites of the federal and state governments, the forest industries, service and supply companies, associations and nongovernmental organizations, consultants, education and research, forestry news, employment opportunities, and more.

Southern Regional Extension Forestry http://www.sref.info/: is especially useful for those seeking forestry information associated with the Southeastern United States. A useful clickable map of the region is provided on the home page for easy access to each state's forestry extension department, forestry school, forestry agency, forestry association, and other information. It also features regional programs, projects, publications and services.

Southern Group of State Foresters http://www.southernforests.org/: links the state forestry agencies for the southern states, as well as other useful on-line forestry resources and publications.

UF-IFAS School of Forest Resources and Conservation Extension http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/Extension/sfrc_extension/index.html: has recently been revised and contains introductory information on key topics, provides more detailed information in on-line publications, and contains extensive links to forest resources Web sites.

- One of these, **Florida Forestry Information**

  http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/Extension/florida_forestry_ information/index.html, is a comprehensive source of forest and forest management information. It features a

regularly updated events calendar and bulletin board featuring natural resource related news briefs, resources for landowners and more.

- The SFRC Web site is linked with the University of Florida's primary Extension Web site **Solutions for Your Life** http://www.solutionsforyourlife.ifas.ufl.edu/, where information is available related to agriculture, the environment, community development, lawn and garden, and families and youth development.

- And both of these main Web portals are linked to the **Electronic Data Information Source** http://www.edis.ifas.ufl.edu, where all the University of Florida Extension publications are stored and accessible for downloading and printing.

USDA Forest Service: Southern Region http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/: contains information about national forests, news, state and private forestry, Forest Service research and more. Most useful to landowners is the state and private forestry section, which has information on income taxes, cooperative assistance programs, forest health and forest management.

- **Interface South** http://www.interfacesouth.org/: is the component of the USDA Forest Service, Centers for Urban and Interface Forestry that focuses on wildland-urban interface (WUI) issues. This Web site is dedicated to heightening awareness of and providing information about WUI issues.

WWW Virtual Library: Forestry http://www.metla.fi/info/vlib/Forestry/: contains a worldwide collection of links to forestry groups, special interest networks, emailing lists, events, publications, products, databases, libraries, universities, organizations, and services.

Conclusions

The Internet can be a powerful learning tool if you know how to find the information you seek. Connecting to the Internet is now very simple and affordable with today's technology. The Web sites introduced in this publication serve as excellent starting points from which to find specific forest resource information, organizations and services.

References

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Table 1. Internet Connection Comparison

Connection	Description	Speed	Hardware	Approximate Cost	Pros	Cons
Modem	Electronic translator that allows exchange of information between digital (computer) and analog (phone) signals.	Up to 56 Kilobytes per second (Kbps)	modem	$50 - $100 for modem $20 - $30/month service	Inexpensive. Good if not using to load or send large data files (audio, video and many graphics).	Dial-up required. Low data capacity and SLOW - too slow to download audio and/or video files in a reasonable amount of time.
Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)	Carries digital signals to homes or businesses over the copper telephone lines already installed.	128 Kbps to 1.54 Megabytes per second (Mbps)	DSL modem	$50 - $200 for modem $60 - $80/month services	Good data capacity and Speed. Ability to transfer vocie, video and data on the same line digitally so users can talk on the phone and use the Internet simultaneously, without interference to either.	Not available everywhere. Speed can vary widely and the connection is faster for receiving data than it is for sending data.
Cable	Connects you to the Internet through a coaxial cable, often using the same line that carries your cable TV service.	500 Kbps to 2 Mbps	Cable modem	$75 - $200 for modem $40 - $60/month service	Greater capacity and speed than DSL, widely available, relatively inexpensive.	Router required (additional $50 - $125) for more than one computer.
Satellite	For rural users that don't have DSL in their area, satellite is becoming a more common alternative for high-speed Internet access.	Downstream up to 400 Kbps Upstream limited to 128 Kbps	Satellite dish, Satellite modem	$200 - $800 for hardware and installation $50 - $75/month service	Access the Internet anywhere with clear southern exposure. Widely available.	Upload capacity lower than download speed. Heavy bandwidth Users may be subject to "fair access policy" that limits use.