

# Study shows housing development on the rise near national forests

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America's national forests and grasslands provide the largest single source of freshwater in the United States, habitat for a third of all federally listed threatened or endangered species, and recreation opportunities for people (about 205 million visits are made annually to national forests).

These and other benefits could be altered by increased housing growth. The population of the United States is projected to increase by 135 million people between 2000 and 2050. Americans are moving closer to national forests and other public lands because of the amenities they provide. As a result, housing density is expected to increase on more than 21.7 million acres of rural private lands located within 10 miles of national forests and grasslands by 2030, according to a recent study from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.

“Forests, farms, ranches, and other open spaces are rapidly being developed as more people are choosing to live at the urban fringe and in scenic, rural areas,” says Forest Service Chief Abigail Kimbell. “This development is affecting our ability to manage national forests and grasslands as well as our ability to help private landowners and communities manage their land for public benefits and ecosystem services.”

The recently released, *National Forests on the Edge: Development Pressures on America's National Forests and Grasslands*, provides information on rural residential development to private landowners and

communities as they work to manage and conserve open space.

Some of the findings in the report are:

Nine national forests and grasslands are projected to experience substantial increases in housing density on at least 25 percent of adjacent private land; the Bitterroot National Forest in Idaho and Montana ranks highest in this category.

Almost all eastern national forests are may experience high to moderate increases in adjacent housing density. Private lands bordering national forests in Colorado, northwestern Montana, northern Idaho, California, and Oregon are also projected to experience moderate to high increases.

Thirteen national forests are projected to experience substantial residential development on more than ½ million acres of adjacent, currently rural, private lands. Most of these national forests are located in southern states and in the Northeast and Great Lakes regions.

Source: USDA Forest Service

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