

Texas is second to Alaska in acres of forest land

March 26 2009, By JACKIE STONE , Associated Press Writers

(AP) -- The first detailed statewide tree count in Texas history is headed toward this conclusion: Texas is No. 2.

The [Texas Forest Service](#) said Wednesday initial results of the first inventory outside East Texas indicate that the state has 60 million acres of forest land. That ranks second to Alaska and is about 23 percent of the [forestation](#) in the southern U.S.

The state has counted trees in the [Piney Woods](#) above the Gulf Coast since the 1930s. But this is the first scientific statewide tally.

"Last one we had was some dude on a horse in like 1904, rode through there and made notes," said Burl Carraway, a forest service department head.

The 10-year study is at the halfway point. But Tom Boggus, the state forester and interim director of the forest service, said he doesn't expect the number to change. The projection was made from 10,000 plots of land scattered from the heavily [wooded areas](#) of East Texas to the desert plains of West Texas.

The forest service called the report a baseline for all change - like the U.S. census, but for trees.

"Before, we didn't know. We would just do a track at a time and hope we're effective," Boggus said. "But now, we can go back and say, 'Yeah,

we have made a real impact on the mesquite control, or juniper control, or water quality."

The report says 35 percent of Texas forests are mesquite woodlands, 25 percent are hardwoods and 18 percent are juniper, also known as cedar.

Boggus said the ongoing inventory helped the forest service measure damage from the rash of hurricanes that have hit the Gulf Coast in recent years.

The forest census could also help state and private land owners evaluate the potential for biomass and alternative energy use, wildfire risk and wildlife, Boggus said.

Another 10-year survey will begin after the current one ends in 2014.

On the Net:

Texas Forest Service: <http://txforestsservice.tamu.edu>

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Citation: Texas is second to Alaska in acres of forest land (2009, March 26) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-03-texas-alaska-acres-forest.html>

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