

Indicator 36. Number and Type of Facilities Available for General Recreation and Tourism in Relation to Population and Forest Area

Facilities and miles	Region			
	North	South	West ³⁰	U.S.
Millions of forest acres open	90.7	104.8	64.6	260.1
Percent with overnight facilities ³¹	24.1	17.9	30.9	22.5
Percent with day-use facilities ³²	20.4	17.3	13.6	18.2
Millions of trail miles	2.3	3.6	0.4	6.3
Millions of road miles	3.0	4.3	1.2	8.5

Source: National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, 2000–2001.

Table 36-1. Estimated number of overnight and day-use facilities and miles of maintained roads and trails on private nonindustrial lands in relation to forest area by region.

What Is the Indicator and Why Is It Important?

This indicator shows the degree to which forest recreation capacity has been enhanced by developing facilities or otherwise providing more access. While it is essential to have forest land open for outdoor recreation (indicator 35), it is also essential that access and facilities are provided for a wide range of activities and physical abilities. Facilities on private land are especially important in the populated East. On all forest lands they will become more important as the population becomes more urban and older. Activities that depend on roads, trails, and developed sites have been growing in popularity among all segments of the U.S. population. Significant sectors of the U.S. economy depend on that growth, and available outdoor facilities are necessary to sustain it.

What Does the Indicator Show?

Direct measures are largely unavailable for most types of forest recreation facilities. Best available sources were used to approximate camping, hiking, picnicking, winter sports, and private, nonindustrial forest facilities. Those sources indicate that 30 to 50 percent of camping capacity is in forest settings. In addition, of 2,172 Federal areas, 917 are predominantly forested and provide camping, picnicking, hiking, and/or snow sport facilities. Also, nearly 58 percent of State parks in the country (1,533 of 2,665) have significant forest cover and provide camping, trails, picnicking, and

winter sports facilities. Facilities on nonindustrial private forest lands are important sources of outdoor recreation, especially in the East, and are a major driver of overall facility capacity trends. Table 36-1 shows generally greater percentages of owners of private forest lands in the eastern two regions provide day-use facilities, while a larger proportion of western forest owners provide overnight facilities. Eastern owners provide greater miles of trails (94 percent of the national total) and of roads (nearly 86 percent of the national total). The trend in facility capacity has generally been down in recent decades because of modest decreases to minimal growth in investment in developed forest sites on public lands and falling nonindustrial forest acres open to the public (where facilities are provided).

Why Can't the Entire Indicator Be Reported at This Time?

Systematic inventory of facilities at Federal, State, local, and private levels has not been funded since the last Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan in the 1970s. The USDA Forest Service conducts the Nation's decennial Resources Planning Act Assessment using largely secondary sources, but these sources provide inconsistent coverage, detail and format. None of these secondary sources provide information about whether the facilities are in forest settings.

³⁰ The Rocky Mountain/Great Plains and Pacific Coast regions are combined because of limited data sample size.

³¹ Cabins, campsites, or other overnight sites.

³² Picnicking, swimming, or other day-use facilities.

Source: National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, 2000–2001.