

Long-term Silvicultural & Ecological Studies

Results for Science and Management

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The Editors

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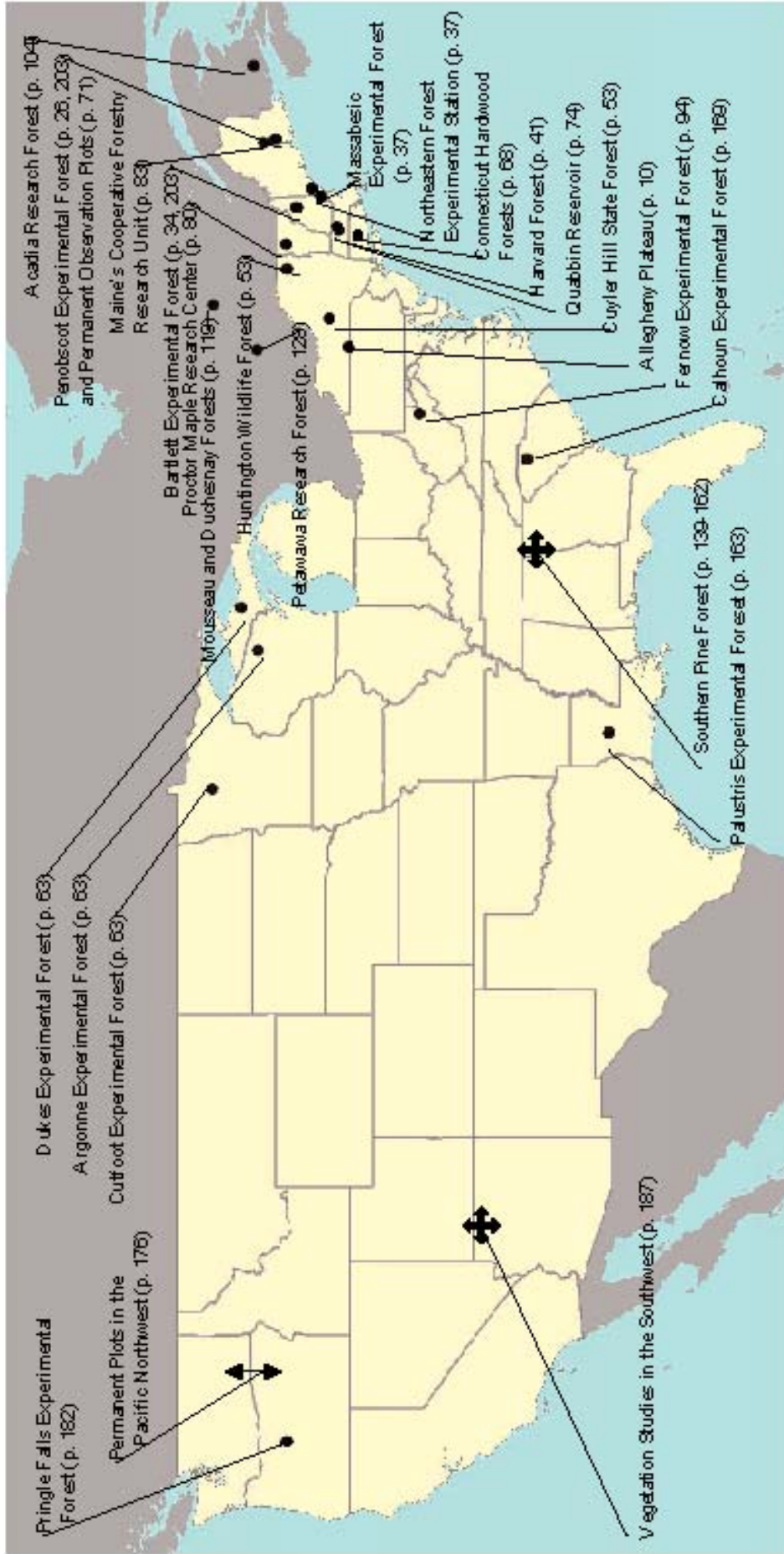
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Editors' Note

Forest management and silvicultural practice is based on knowledge of the dynamic responses of forests to disturbances, treatments, or just letting nature take its course over long time periods. Much of this knowledge comes from long term silvicultural and ecological experiments on both public and private lands throughout North America. Initiated by groups of researchers representing a variety of research institutions, these studies have provided key insights into managing forests for an array of commodities and ecosystem services. These long-term datasets allow current researchers to more rapidly assess emerging issues including wildlife responses to forest management, carbon sequestration, and global climate change. Papers in this volume illustrate many examples.

This multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary approach to long-term silvicultural and ecological research led to impressive gains in scientific and practical knowledge. Yet, many installations are now threatened by a lack of continued interest and/or funding. Neither financial nor physical security is assured for these crucial experiments. Infrastructure is decaying as research teams are breaking up because commitment to these long-term studies is lacking.

Resolving these problems is made more difficult because individual experiments exist in isolation. No mechanisms exist for fostering communication among experiment “owners” or promoting the value of these experiments to land managers who benefited from information gained in the past and stand to benefit from future discoveries. With the notable exception of the Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) sites in the United States, no single coordinating body exists to promote the benefits of long term research and lobby for improvements in funding, land tenure security, or long-term data archiving.

This volume began in conversations among researchers and forest managers who believe that long-term silvicultural and ecological studies are a valuable but endangered asset. We initially convened a day-long session at the 2005 New England Society of American Foresters (NESAF) annual meeting to discuss the issue and invite those working on long-term research to submit papers. This volume—highlighting some of what we’ve learned from a subset of long-term studies—is a compilation of those papers, supplemented by others solicited after that meeting. As you read through this compendium, we strongly urge you to let us know of other studies—we anticipate a second volume that includes the many places for which we did not have time to solicit papers. We hope to generate interest for an informal network of long term forest ecology and management experiments. We need new ways to promote the value of funding long term research; to protect existing experiments and datasets; to promote better communication among research groups involved with long term studies; and to promote continued information transfer from knowledge gained through long term research to land managers, other scientists, and the public.

Sincerely,
Lloyd, Ann, John, and Zack