

About the Data

Estimates presented here are based upon the latest information from the National Resources Inventory (NRI). The NRI is a longitudinal sample survey based upon scientific statistical principles and procedures. It is conducted by the U.S.

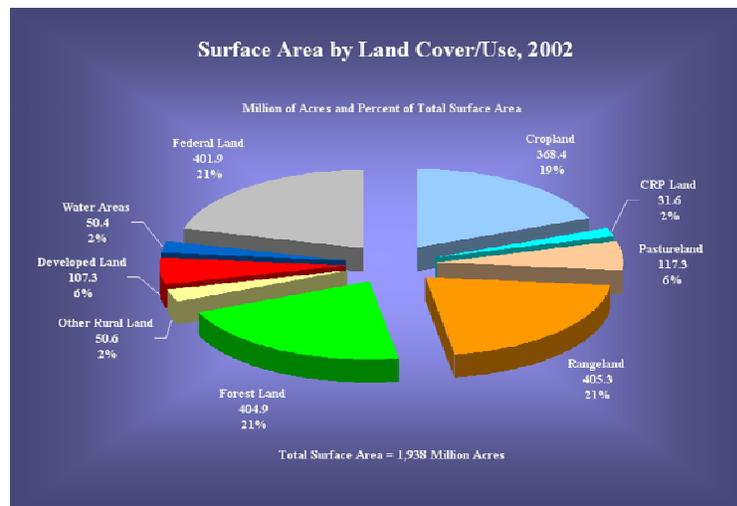
Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in cooperation with Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology.

This is the second Annual NRI for which results are being released. The first release in 2001 presented only national level results for a limited number of topics. During the period 1982 to 1997, NRI data were collected at 800,000 sample sites every 5 years. Now the data are collected every year, but for slightly less than 25 percent of these same sample sites. The 2002 data are suitable for analyses at more refined scales than the 2001 Annual NRI, as reliability levels increase with the inclusion of additional data years. As data from subsequent inventory years are added to the database, results will become available to support regional, state, and sub-state analyses. Current estimates cover the contiguous 48 states. Future estimates will also cover Hawaii, Alaska, the Caribbean, and selected Pacific Basin islands.

The National Resources Inventory (NRI) is a statistical survey of natural resource conditions and trends on nonfederal land in the United States - nonfederal lands include privately owned lands, tribal and trust lands, and lands controlled by State and local governments. The NRI provides nationally consistent statistical data on how these lands are used and on changes in land use patterns for the period 1982 - 2002. To assess conservation issues on nonfederal rural lands, this land use information must be analyzed in conjunction with the other NRI data elements. Land uses of particular interest are those that are used in the production of agricultural and timber products that are the foundation of our Nation's agricultural economy.

Key Findings

- The contiguous 48 states cover 1.9 billion acres.
- The majority of this area (71 percent) is in nonfederal, rural land uses - nearly 1.4 billion acres, which is composed of rangeland, forest land, cropland, pastureland, other rural land, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land.

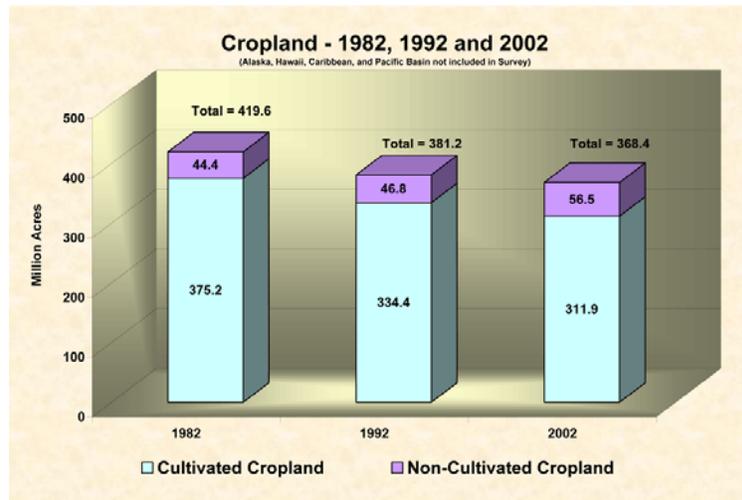


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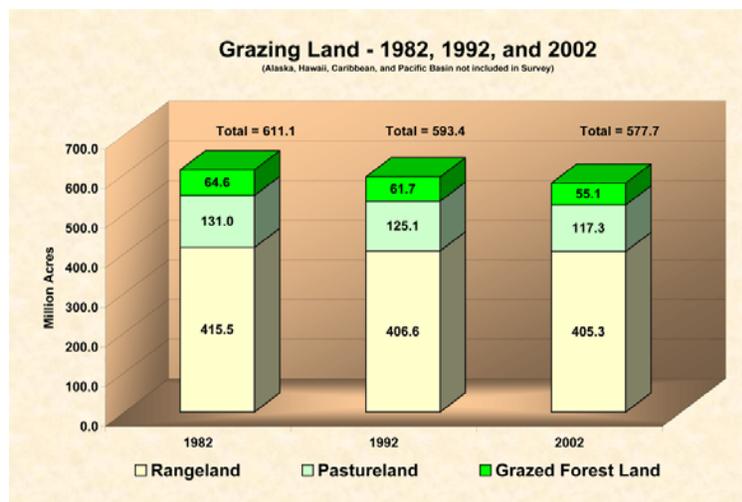
The findings on land use come from the NRI data category "Land Cover/Use," which comprises mutually exclusive categories such as cropland, rangeland, forest land, other rural land, developed land, and water areas. The NRI uses this classification to account for each and every acre of nonfederal land within the Nation. Every parcel of land is described by one and only one of these categories.

The NRI approach to conducting inventories facilitates examining trends in rural and developed land uses over time because -

- the same sample sites have been studied since 1982,
- the same data have been collected since 1982 [definitions and protocols have remained the same],
- the inventory accounts for 100 percent of the surface area,
- quality assurance and statistical procedures are designed/ developed to ensure that trend data are scientifically legitimate and unambiguous, and
- it is easy to track lands as they go from one land-use category to another.



- The Nation's cropland acreage declined from 420 million acres in 1982 to 368 million acres in 2002, a decrease of about 12 percent. The net decline between 1992 and 2002 was 13 million acres, or 3 percent.
- The percentage of total cropland that is noncultivated has continued to increase since 1982. Noncultivated cropland accounted for 15 percent (57 million acres) of cropland acreage in 2002, up from 11 percent (44 million acres) in 1982.
- Between 1982 and 2002, nonfederal acreage devoted to grazing uses - rangeland, pastureland, and grazed forest land - declined from 611 million acres in 1982 to 578 million acres in 2002, a decrease of over 5 percent. Between 1992 and 2002, the net decline in grazing land acreage was less than 3 percent.



About the Data, cont.

Irrespective of the scale of analysis, margins of error must be considered. Margins of error (at the 95 percent confidence level) are presented for all NRI estimates.

Importance to the Nation

Land use is surprisingly dynamic, with annual shifts in and out of different uses. Examining net change in land use reveals general trends, but masks the real extent of land use change over time. In agriculture there are frequent shifts in the use of land among cropland, pastureland, rangeland, and forest land. Each time land changes use it may affect erosion potential, contiguity of habitat, or hydrologic features of the landscape.

Cropland, pastureland, rangeland, and forest land comprise the majority of the Nation's land resources and thus:

- The condition of these lands influence directly or indirectly the environment enjoyed by the Nation.
- Meeting the Nation's objectives for natural resources and environmental quality will depend on how these lands are used and conserved.

More Information

For more information about the NRI, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/>

See the 2002 Annual NRI Glossary for definitions of key terms: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/land/nri02/glossary.html>

To obtain State and local 1997 NRI data, contact your NRI coordinator. Links to State NRI websites and contact information can be found at:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/1997/obtain_data.html

Send comments and questions to The NRI Help Desk, nri@nhq.nrcs.usda.gov

**Total Surface Area by Land Use and Year
in Millions of Acres, with Margins of Error**

Year	Cropland	CRP Land	Pastureland	Rangeland	Forest Land	Other Rural Land	Developed Land	Water Areas	Federal Land
1982	419.6 ± 1.2	0.0 ± 0.0	131.0 ± 0.7	415.5 ± 1.9	403.0 ± 1.5	48.0 ± 0.7	72.8 ± 0.4	48.6 ± 0.1	399.1 ± 0.0
1992	381.2 ± 1.1	34.0 ± 0.1	125.1 ± 0.7	406.6 ± 1.7	404.0 ± 1.4	49.3 ± 0.7	86.5 ± 0.5	49.4 ± 0.1	401.5 ± 0.0
2002	368.4 ± 1.2	31.6 ± 0.2	117.3 ± 0.9	405.3 ± 1.8	404.9 ± 1.5	50.6 ± 0.8	107.3 ± 0.7	50.4 ± 0.1	401.9 ± 0.0

* CRP was not implemented until 1985.

Total surface area of the contiguous United States is 1,937.7 million acres

**Cultivated and Noncultivated Cropland by Year
in Millions of Acres, with Margins of Error**

Year	Cultivated Cropland	Noncultivated Cropland	Total Cropland
1982	375.2 ± 1.2	44.4 ± 0.4	419.6 ± 1.2
1992	334.4 ± 1.1	46.8 ± 0.4	381.2 ± 1.1
2002	311.9 ± 1.3	56.5 ± 1.0	368.4 ± 1.2

**Nonfederal Grazing Land by Year
in Millions of Acres, with Margins of Error**

Year	Pastureland	Rangeland	Grazed Forest Land	Total Grazing Land
1982	131.0 ± 0.7	415.5 ± 1.9	64.6 ± 1.6	611.0 ± 2.0
1992	125.1 ± 0.7	406.6 ± 1.7	61.7 ± 1.4	593.4 ± 2.0
2002	117.3 ± 0.9	405.3 ± 1.8	55.1 ± 1.2	577.7 ± 2.2