

# Welcome to the Facts to the Future Edition of the *Natural Inquirer!*



In 1974, Congress decided that the United States needed an evaluation of the Nation's renewable (re noo uh bul) natural resources. Renewable natural resources are environmental products and services that can be replenished even as they are being used.

Examples of renewable natural resources are water, minerals, and trees. Congress believed that one of the best ways to take care of our renewable natural resources is to gather the best information that we can about them. Then, armed with the best information, we can make good decisions about the use and protection of our nation's renewable natural resources.

Congress decided that the USDA Forest Service could provide this kind of information. They passed legislation (lej is la shun), called the Resources Planning Act of 1974, or RPA for short. The

act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to ensure that the research is completed and reported every 10 years.

Scientists working in the USDA Forest Service conduct the required research about these renewable natural resources. (You can read about the USDA Forest Service on the back of this journal, or on the Web site by clicking on "About the Forest Service.") Through their research, the scientists determine the current situation and the probable future of renewable natural resources, 40 years into the future.

The articles in this *Natural Inquirer* include just a few of the renewable natural resources studied by USDA Forest Service scientists. By reading these articles, you will learn about the condition of the resources in the year 2000, and you will learn what might happen to them by the year

2040. In the year 2040, how old will you be? Do you think that the condition of the Nation's renewable natural resources will be important to our society in 2040? Why or why not?

The articles in this journal will help you to think about the future of global climate change, the Nation's wildlife, our fresh water, our fish, the trees that grow in our cities and towns, and the conditions that tell us whether our forests and rangelands are healthy. As you read the articles, remember that it is hard to predict the future. Although scientists do the best job they can, many things can change in the future. One of the things that can change is how people take care of our renewable natural resources. To keep our environment healthy into the future, we need to take care of our natural resources today!

