

Opinion: Calif. losing its prized rural forestland

By Jane Braxton Little, Sacramento Bee

California values forests. From coastal stands of iconic redwoods to high-elevation pines, trees cover 33 million acres, nearly one-third of the state. Private owners manage around 40 percent of these forests, an area more than twice the size of Alaska's Denali National Park.

Today California is losing these prized forestlands incrementally – one luxury home, one ski run at a time.

Lawmakers have historically recognized the critical role private forests play in the state's economy and beyond: providing water and wildlife habitat, storing carbon, creating and retaining soil. Among the steps they have taken to protect timberlands is the Forest Taxation Reform Act of 1976, the cornerstone of California forest policy. It establishes Timber Production Zoning (TPZ) designed to promote the long-term growth of timber on private lands by offering tax incentives that encourage protection of young trees and restrict other land uses.

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