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2007 NRI: CHANGES IN LAND COVER/USE—RURAL LAND

GENERAL

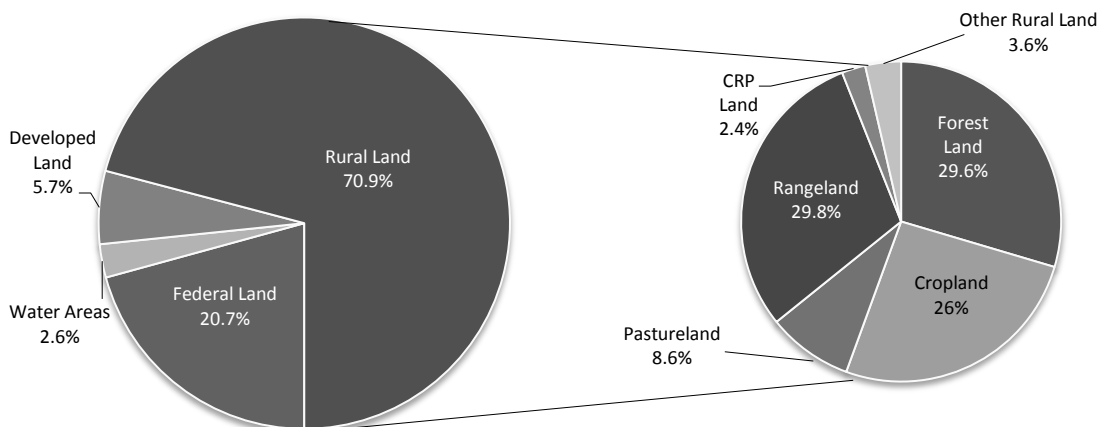
- The National Resources Inventory (NRI) is conducted by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in cooperation with Iowa State University's Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology.
- The 2007 NRI tracks natural resources conditions and trends on non-federal land from 1982. The 2007 summary report provides estimates for the 48 contiguous states and documents changes in land cover/use for six different reporting periods: 1982–1987, 1987–1992, 1992–1997, 1997–2002, 2002–2007 and 1982–2007.
- The NRI is the best source for farmland conversion data. It tracks all changes in land cover/use on non-federal land at the national and state levels. The Census of Agriculture is a complete count of farms (i.e., places from which at least \$1,000 of agricultural products were produced and sold in the census year) and reports on agricultural production. The census also reports on net changes in “land in farms,” which covers about two-thirds (922 million acres) of the non-federal rural land (1.4 billion acres) monitored by NRI.

The fundamental difference between the two sources can produce seemingly contradictory data. The 2007 NRI reports that in every state rural land was converted to developed land, while the 2007 Census of Agriculture reports an *increase* in land in farms in some states. Both are possible. Even as the amount of non-federal rural land shrinks, it still can accommodate increases in land in farms. Increases in land in farms may reflect new farms, farm expansion and/or efforts to identify and survey nontraditional farms—boosting farm and land in farms numbers.

LAND USE

- The contiguous 48 states cover 1,937,664,200 acres of land and water. Of this, there are 1,373,658,800 acres of non-federal rural land (70.9%), 401,936,900 acres of federal land (20.7%), 111,251,200 acres of developed land (5.7%) and 50,817,300 acres in water areas (2.6%).
- The nearly 1.4 billion acres of non-federal rural land is comprised of: 409,119,400 acres of rangeland (29.8%), 406,410,400 acres of forest land (29.6%), 357,023,500 acres of cropland (26%), 118,615,700 acres of pastureland (8.6%), 49,639,600 acres of other rural land (3.6%) and 32,850,200 acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) (2.4%).

Total Surface Area by Land Cover/Use, 2007





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2007 NRI: CHANGES IN LAND COVER/USE—RURAL LAND

RURAL LAND (crop, CRP, pasture, range, forest and other rural land)

Rural land is a group of land/cover use categories that includes crop, CRP, pasture, range, forest and other rural land. This term appears in the NRI tables but is not defined in the NRI summary report's glossary of selected terms. Note that agricultural land (see *2007 NRI: Changes in Land Cover/Use—Agricultural Land*) is a subset of rural land. Tables 9–16, referenced below, provide state-level conversion data for rural land and prime rural land and are available online at www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/38415/FIC_NRI_2007_Data_Tables.pdf.

1982–2007

- 41,324,800 acres of rural land were converted to developed uses. This represents an area about the size of Illinois and New Jersey combined.
- Every state lost rural land to development. States experiencing the largest losses:
 1. Texas 3,502,500 acres
 2. Florida 2,765,600 acres
 3. North Carolina 2,534,100 acres
 4. Georgia 2,437,700 acres
 5. California 2,142,100 acres

For the complete list of states ranked by rural land converted to developed land, see [Table 9](#).

- States in which the largest percentage of rural land was converted to developed land:
 1. New Jersey 19.96%
 2. Massachusetts 16.72%
 3. Rhode Island 12.04%
 4. Delaware 11.67%
 5. Maryland 10.53%

For the complete list of states ranked by percentage of rural land converted to developed land, see [Table 10](#).

2002–2007

- 7,491,300 acres of rural land were converted to developed land—an area nearly the size of Maryland. This amounts to an average annual conversion rate of 1,498,200 acres.
- Rural land was converted in every state. States experiencing the largest losses:
 1. Texas 822,600 acres
 2. Florida 574,800 acres
 3. Georgia 416,000 acres
 4. North Carolina 412,800 acres
 5. California 374,800 acres

For the complete list of states ranked by rural land converted to developed land, see [Table 11](#).

- States in which the largest percentage of rural land was developed:
 1. Delaware 3.07%
 2. New Jersey 2.48%
 3. Rhode Island 2.47%
 4. Massachusetts 2.25%
 5. Florida 2.24%

For the complete list of states ranked by percentage of rural land converted to developed land, see [Table 12](#).

- The national rate of rural land conversion declined. The average annual conversion rate during 2002–2007 dropped 23 percent from the previous reporting period (1997–2002).



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2007 NRI: CHANGES IN LAND COVER/USE—RURAL LAND

PRIME RURAL LAND (prime soils underlying crop, CRP, pasture, range, forest and other rural land)

Prime rural land is a subset of rural land underlain by prime farmland soils—those best suited for producing food and other agricultural crops with the fewest inputs and least amount of soil erosion.

1982–2007

- 11,573,800 acres of prime rural land were converted to developed land.
- Prime rural land was converted in every state with available data. States with the largest losses:

1. Texas	1,251,000 acres
2. Ohio	758,200 acres
3. North Carolina	707,700 acres
4. Georgia	530,500 acres
5. Alabama	476,300 acres

For the complete list of states ranked by prime rural land converted to developed land, see [Table 13](#).

- The following states converted the greatest percentage of their prime rural land:

1. New Jersey	28.76%
2. Massachusetts	24.36%
3. Rhode Island	22.09%
4. Arizona	18.88%
5. Delaware	14.72%

For the complete list of states ranked by percentage of prime rural land converted to developed land, see [Table 14](#).

2002–2007

- 2,036,300 acres of prime rural land were converted to developed land.
- Prime rural land was converted in every state with available data. States with the largest losses:

1. Texas	317,600 acres
2. Ohio	120,700 acres
3. Alabama	101,800 acres
4. North Carolina	98,300 acres
5. Louisiana	98,000 acres

For the complete list of states ranked by prime rural land converted to developed land, see [Table 15](#).

- The following states converted the greatest percentage of their prime rural land:

1. Rhode Island	6.40%
2. New Hampshire	3.85%
3. New Jersey	3.77%
4. Delaware	3.68%
5. Massachusetts	2.41%

For the complete list of states ranked by percentage of prime rural land converted to developed land, see [Table 16](#).

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