

Miscellaneous Other Land Uses

The remaining 228 million acres (10 percent) of the Nation's land is **miscellaneous other** land (see Appendix for detailed descriptions of terms in **bold**). These uses consist of **rural residential area** (see “Urban and Rural Residential Uses,” p. 28), as well as marshes, open swamps, desert, tundra, and other land not inventoried and generally of low value for agricultural purposes. Acreage of this unclassified land is relatively large in arid portions of the West and several Atlantic and Gulf coastal areas. With extensive areas of tundra, Alaska has 131 million acres of miscellaneous other land, over 57 percent of the U.S. total. Land classed under miscellaneous and other uses declined by 7 million acres (3 percent) from 1997 to 2002. This decline is partially a result of new data on rural roads and railroads, which raised the estimate of transportation uses by 2 million acres, and other increases in **special uses** (see “Special Uses,” p. 31).

While some of the 94 million acres of rural residential land may be included under miscellaneous other uses, total miscellaneous other land in the contiguous United States equals just 97 million acres. According to the National Resources Inventory (NRI), non-Federal “barren” land and marshlands totaled 32 million acres in the 48 contiguous States in 1997. Since these lands are likely included under miscellaneous other uses in the Major Land Uses (MLU) estimates, this suggests that at least 30 percent, and possibly much more, of rural residential land overlaps with some of the other land uses, perhaps forest-use land or grassland pasture and range.

Some of the miscellaneous land may constitute wetland acreage, although wetlands can occur on land in a variety of other MLU categories, including cropland, grassland pasture and range, forest uses, special uses, and urban land. “Wetland” is thus a designation related to land cover, as opposed to land use. According to the NRI, non-Federal acreage of wetlands in the contiguous 48 States, excluding deepwater habitats, totaled almost 111 million acres in 2002, about 6 percent of the total U.S. land area. Sixteen million (14 percent) of these wetland acres were classed as “other rural land,” a residual category similar to miscellaneous other land in MLU. Of the remaining wetland acres inventoried by NRI in 2003, 66 million occurred on forest land; 17 million were on cropland, pasture, or Conservation Reserve Program land; 8 million were rangeland; 2 million were developed land; and 3 million were classified as water areas (USDA/NRCS, 2005).

The NRI estimates a 22,000-acre net loss in total wetland acreage from 1992 to 1997, followed by an overall net gain of almost 100,000 acres from 1997 to 2003 (USDA/NRCS, 2005). Using a different sampling technique and including both Federal and non-Federal land, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) estimates total wetland acreage in the contiguous 48 States at 106 million acres in 1997, and reports a total net loss of 644,000 acres from 1987 to 1997. This net loss was 80 percent lower than the FWS-estimated decline from 1977 to 1987 (Dahl, 2000).