

China's Forests Steadily Recovering From Decades of Deforestation

by Good News Network - May 7, 2016



China's sweeping program to restore forests across the country is working.

The vast destruction of China's forests from decades of logging, floods and conversion to farmland, has now become a story of recovery, according to the first independent verification published in today's *Science Advances* by Michigan State University researchers.

The turnaround is thanks to the country's National Forest Conservation Program (NFCP) established at the beginning of the 21st century, the largest forest conservation and restoration program in the world. It bans logging in many forested areas and compensates citizens who monitor activities and help prevent illegal timber harvesting.



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“It is encouraging that China’s forest has been recovering in the midst of its daunting environmental challenges such as severe air pollution and water shortages,” said co-author Jianguo “Jack” Liu, director of MSU’s Center for Systems Integration and Sustainability, who points out that China is increasingly connected with other countries both socioeconomically and environmentally.

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The researchers used NASA’s satellite imaging technology to examine and correlate the status of forestry growth with the implementation of the NFCP. And, as the Chinese government has contended, the program is working and forests are recovering—with about 1.6 percent, or nearly 61,000 square miles (158,000 square km), of China’s territory seeing a significant gain in tree cover.

“Our results are very positive for China,” said author Andrés Viña. “If you look at China in isolation, its program is working effectively and contributing to carbon sequestration in accordance to its agenda for climate change mitigation.”

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The Michigan researchers were supported by the National Science Foundation and MSU AgBioResearch.

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