

## **Deforestation in the Commons: An Institutional Approach**

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### **Abstract**

The majority of Mexico's remaining forest (85%) is found in common property holdings, raising the question of how community level decisions affect the rate of deforestation, which is perceived as one of the country's most pressing environmental problems. Using community level survey data from 1994 & 1997 combined with the National Forest Inventories of 1994 and 2000, I test of a model of costly cooperation in the management of common forest resources. I find that both geophysical and cooperation variables are important in determining the rate of deforestation. Larger land holdings with a higher percentage of low-slope areas experience higher forest loss, as does increased participation in community meetings and activities. Inequality in the distribution of private land holdings increases deforestation, lending some support to an interest group explanation of resource management.