



Michigan Forest Stewardship Program

Michigan's Forests. Michigan ranks 11th in the nation with 20.3 million acres of forest land that cover 55% of the land area of our two peninsulas. The State and Federal governments own and manage 7 million acres of forest land in Michigan. Private corporations own and manage almost 3 million acres of forest land. However, Michigan's 400,000 family forest owners are the largest group of forest owners with more than 9 million acres of forest land.

What is the Forest Stewardship Program? The Forest Stewardship Program is a partnership between the United States Forest Service (USFS), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and private sector foresters to offer professional planning and technical assistance to forest landowners. The voluntary Program connects landowners with professional foresters to develop and implement a Forest Stewardship Plan. Since 1991, more than 5,000 landowners in Michigan have used a Forest Stewardship Plan to help them manage, protect, and enjoy their forest.

Simple yet Comprehensive Plans. Each Forest Stewardship Plan is a custom plan that describes the landowner's personal goals, unique forest resources, and suggested management activities. The DNR trains private sector foresters and wildlife biologists to write Forest Stewardship Plans that meet USFS guidelines for a simple yet comprehensive plan. There are 80 certified Plan Writers with several available to write plans in every county in Michigan. DNR Service Foresters review Forest Stewardship Plans to ensure that the plans meet Program standards.

Financial Assistance. The Michigan Forest Stewardship Program also provides financial assistance to lower the cost of a Forest Stewardship Plan. A partial cost share (\$200 per plan plus \$0.50 per acre up to \$2,500) for parcels ≥ 20 acres is available throughout the year. The cost share is paid through grants to the certified Plan Writers to minimize the application and payment process for landowners. Fees for plan writing will vary between Plan Writers.

Program Benefits. Investing in a Forest Stewardship Plan produces both economic and ecological benefits. A landowner may use their Forest Stewardship Plan to enroll in the Commercial Forest Program or the Qualified Forest Program to lower their property taxes. Although participation in the Forest Stewardship Program is voluntary, these tax law programs require that landowners comply with their forest management plan in exchange for a reduced property tax. The Natural Resources Conservation Service also accepts Forest Stewardship Plans when a landowner applies for financial assistance to implement conservation practices recommended in their plan. Landowners might also use their Forest Stewardship Plan to enroll in the American Tree Farm System to certify the sustainable management of their forest land. A Forest Stewardship Plan also helps prepare for sustainable harvests that fulfill landowner objectives, improve the ecology of the forest, and optimize both current and future income.

Planning Process. The process for developing a Forest Stewardship Plan is simple, but may take a few months. Landowners should contact several certified Plan Writers to interview them about their management philosophy, time schedule, and fees. Call a DNR Service Forester or visit the Program website for a list of Plan Writers who work in your county. After you hire your selected Plan Writer, fill out the short application form with your Plan Writer, who will send the form to the DNR. After a discussion about your goals for your land, preferably while walking through your forest together, the Plan Writer will do an assessment to gather additional information about your forest resources. When your forester has a draft of your plan ready a few weeks later, read it over, ask lots of clarifying questions, and suggest any needed modifications. When both you and your Plan Writer are satisfied with your Forest Stewardship Plan, the Plan Writer will submit it to a DNR Service Forester for review and approval. After your plan is approved, the DNR will pay the partial cost share payment to the Plan Writer. At the end of the year, the DNR will send a "Stewardship Forest" sign to you to recognize your excellent forest stewardship.

www.michigan.gov/foreststewardship

Outreach and Education Grants. Municipal forest owners (schools, counties, townships) and other private groups may be eligible for a grant to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan or a Demonstration Project. These grants are for public land or land open to the public and must include educational opportunities for private landowners.

DNR Service Foresters

Western Upper Peninsula - Gary Willis, Baraga, (906) 353 - 6651, willisg2@michigan.gov

Eastern Upper Peninsula - Ernie Houghton, Escanaba, (906) 786 - 2351, houghtone@michigan.gov

Northern Lower Peninsula - Mike Hanley, Haslett, (517) 243 - 2028, hanleym@michigan.gov

DNR Forest Stewardship Coordinator

Southern Lower Peninsula - Mike Smalligan, Lansing, (517) 284-5884, smalliganm@michigan.gov



Contact Information for Michigan Forest Management Programs

1. Forest Stewardship Program
 - a. Administered by the Department of Natural Resources
 - b. Website: www.michigan.gov/foreststewardship
 - c. Program Contact: Mike Smalligan; 517-284-5884; smalliganm@michigan.gov
2. Qualified Forest Program
 - a. Administered by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
 - b. Website: www.michigan.gov/qfp
 - c. Program Contact: Rich Harlow; 517-284-5627; harlowr@michigan.gov
3. Commercial Forest Program
 - a. Administered by the Department of Natural Resources
 - b. Website: www.michigan.gov/commercialforest
 - c. Program Contact: Shirley Businski; 517-284-5849; businskis@michigan.gov
4. Environmental Quality Incentives Program
 - a. Administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - b. Website: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/mi/technical/landuse/forestry/
 - c. Program Contact: Andy Henriksen; 517-324-5234; andy.henriksen@mi.usda.gov
5. American Tree Farm System
 - a. Administered by the American Forest Foundation
 - b. Website: www.treefarmssystem.org/michigan
 - c. Program Contact: Scott Robbins; 517-853-8880; srobbins@michiganforest.com