



# **NATIONAL PRIORITIES SECTION UPDATE REPORT MICHIGAN 2015**

**Appendix to:  
Michigan Forest Resource Assessment  
and Strategy - IC 4043 (06/23/2010)**

**Forest Resources Division**

### **MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES MISSION STATEMENT**

"The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the State's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations."

### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION STATEMENT**

The Natural Resources Commission, as the governing body for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, provides a strategic framework for the DNR to effectively manage your resources. The NRC holds monthly, public meetings throughout Michigan, working closely with its constituencies in establishing and improving natural resources management policy.

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This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

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## I. BACKGROUND

The 2008 Farm Bill, under Title VIII – Forestry, amends the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, to include the requirement that each state develop a long-term, state-wide assessment and strategies for forest resources. These assessments and strategies focused on three national priorities:

- Conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses
- Protect forests from threats
- Enhance public benefits from trees and forests

This document was developed with a comprehensive team of stakeholders to address cross-boundary, landscape scale actions that would be the most efficient activities to address issues of concern developed for the assessment phase of the *Michigan's Forest Action Plan*.

This document serves as a record of activities taken by all Michigan stakeholders to address strategic actions taken as part of Michigan's Forest Action Plan and is an addendum to Michigan's Forest Action Plan, 2010-2020. The next update will be developed and incorporated into the new Forest Action Plan, due in 2020.

## II. NATIONAL PRIORITY OR THEME #1: CONSERVE AND MANAGE WORKING FOREST LANDSCAPES FOR MULTIPLE VALUES AND USES

### Issue #1 in Michigan: Promote Sustainable Active Management of Forest Land

#### Key Attributes:

Sustainable management of forest land is the primary attribute for long-term provision of benefits from forest land. The establishment and execution of sound management objectives for productive forest systems is also a key attribute that is necessary for sustainable management. Conserving working forest landscapes includes protecting the function of forest ecosystems through a landscape-level approach, since some aspects of forest management (such as ecosystem services and water quality) are best addressed at the landscape scale.

#### Associated Strategies:

1. Use the Forest Stewardship and other assistance programs to provide information through outreach and education, seek cost-share opportunities and to work with partners to promote sustainable management of private forest lands.
2. Inform the public and community decision-makers about the importance of sustainable forest management, including the values provided to society by essential ecosystem services, forest products that contribute to jobs, wildlife habitat, water and air quality protections, scenic and beauty features, as well as the intangible benefits of natural systems (such as recreational and spiritual needs).

## Strategic Accomplishments:

### 1. Michigan's Forest Stewardship Program

The first of three national priorities is to “conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses.” The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has established a state issue to “promote sustainable active management of private forest land.” The Michigan Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) is the gateway program to help family forest landowners learn about their property and begin to actively manage their forest to achieve their personal goals. The FSP connects landowners with professional foresters and wildlife biologists in the private sector to develop a simple yet comprehensive Forest Stewardship Plan. Two of the primary performance measures for the FSP are the number of active plans and the number of acres covered by those plans. Michigan has served almost 5,350 landowners and planned almost 875,000 acres in the first 25 years of the program. The annual average since 1991 is 215 Forest Stewardship Plans each year covering about 34,320 acres. These numbers fluctuate from year to year based on federal funding, related programs for landowners, and forester participation in the FSP.

One metric that is not reported, but indicates the current vitality and effectiveness of the FSP, is the number of foresters writing Forest Stewardship Plans in Michigan. The number of private-sector foresters participating in the program has doubled in the past two years from about 60 to more than 125 professional foresters to offer services to the 400,000 family forest owners in Michigan. Most of these foresters also participate in related programs to help their clients enroll in property tax programs, forest certification, and ecological restoration activities in addition to core services like timber sale administration and tree planting. The Michigan FSP is playing a leading role in providing professional development opportunities for professional foresters and coordinating the multiple programs available for forest landowners.



## 2. Michigan's Regional State Forest Management Plans

Sustainable forest management is essential to the long-term provision of benefits from forest land, and Michigan has made a commitment to sustainable forest management on the more than 4 million acres of the state forest. The MDNR has also adopted an ecosystem-minded approach to managing state forest lands. These commitments have been recognized by the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, thus the state forest in Michigan has dual forest certification. In order to apply strategic concepts at a landscape-scale to provide operational direction for management decisions the MDNR developed three regional state forest management plans to cover state forest lands.



The forests of Michigan provide many tangible public benefits including forest products, wildlife habitat, water and air quality and scenic features, as well as more intangible benefits of natural systems (such as recreational and spiritual needs). Almost 61% of Michigan's forest land is under private ownership and the regional state forest management plans serve to demonstrate leadership in the area of sustainable forest management and best management practices.



The three regional state forest management plans lay out cover type management objectives for a 10-year period (2013-2023) and the associated harvest targets. These plans and their provisions, in association with the principles and criteria of the forest certification standards and the associated implementation guidelines (called work instructions), clearly demonstrate Michigan's commitment to sustainable forest management and serves as a demonstration model to private landowners and private land programs such as the FSP.



The plans were developed over several years and engaged a wide range of public, stakeholder and partnership groups. As a result, there is a high degree of public acceptance and the plans ensure that all forest values are considered in forest management operation to help ensure that the state forest will remain a working forest landscape.

## **Issue #2 in Michigan: Reduce Divestiture, Parcelization and Conversion of Forest Land**

### **Key Attributes:**

Maintenance of a relatively intact and unfragmented land base that is primarily managed as productive forest land is a key attribute that is necessary to provide these public benefits.

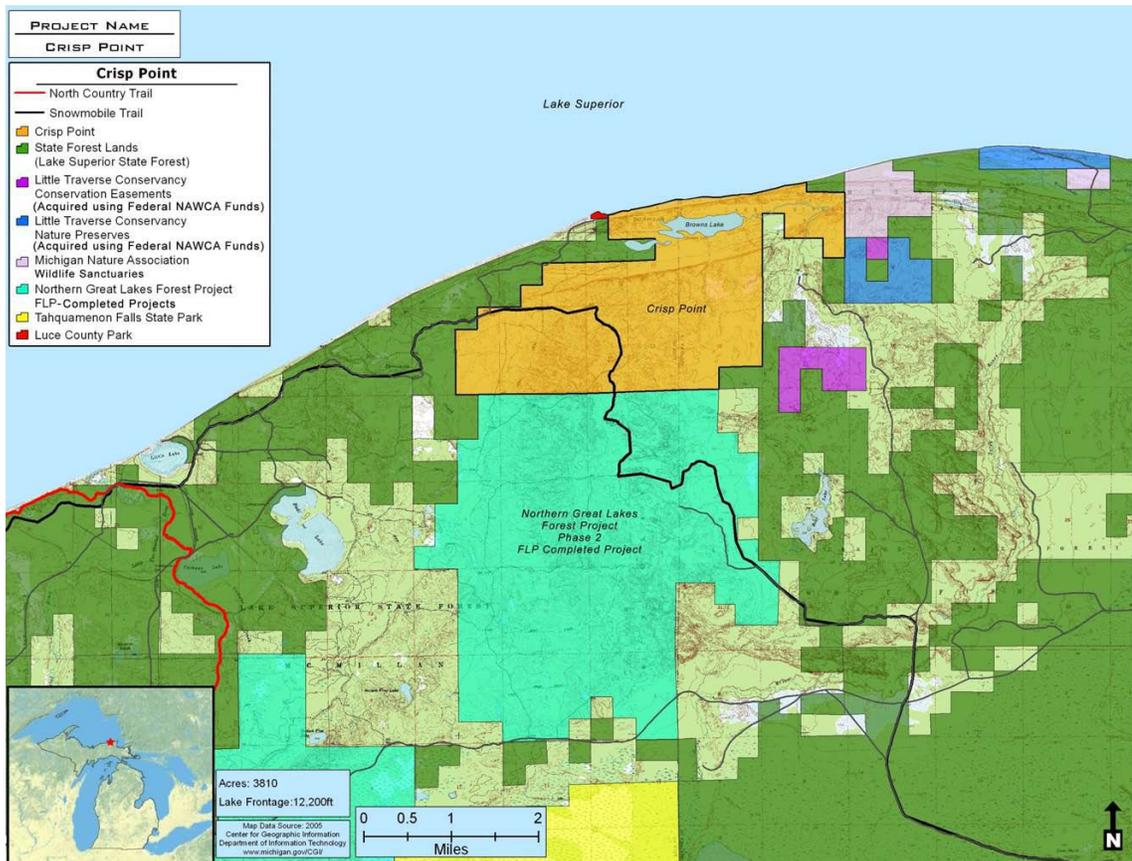
### **Associated Strategies:**

1. Focus programs for the acquisition of conservation easements on those areas of the state with the highest value of productive forest land which is threatened by development.

## Strategic Accomplishments:

### 1. Crisp Point Land Acquisition

The Crisp Point project includes the acquisition of fee simple interest in 3,810 acres of prime forest land in the eastern portion of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Acquisition of this property permanently protected and provides public access to 12,200 feet of Lake Superior shoreline. The property provides critical game and non-game wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered species habitat, refuge for neotropical migratory birds and multiple recreational opportunities. In addition, the property contains Browns Lake and a smaller inland lake that total 83 acres. These lakes, as well as the Lake Superior shoreline, face pressure from second home development. Acquisition of this property by the state will eliminate the possibility of development, ensure sustainable forestry practices and provide for multiple new recreational opportunities. Furthermore, wildlife habitat, soil and water resources and the scenic values of the forest land and undeveloped Great Lakes shoreline will be preserved. This parcel is also strategically located in the middle of state forest land and is directly adjacent to a completed Forest Legacy project (approximately 6,200 acres of the 150,000 acre Northern Great Lakes Forest project).



### III. NATIONAL PRIORITY OR THEME #2: PROTECT FORESTS FROM THREATS

#### Issue #2 in Michigan: Reduce Threats from Invasive Species, Pests and Diseases

##### Key Attributes:

Healthy forest systems contain complete assemblages of characteristic native insect, plant and animal species and intact and functional ecological processes that bind them into complex systems which are essential conditions for providing public benefits.

##### Associated Strategies:

1. Identify destructive agents and evaluate their potential to cause damage or loss.
2. Prevent the introduction and establishment of high-threat invasive insects, plants and animal at state, regional and local levels.
3. Reduce the spread and harm caused by established invasive insects, plants and animals.
4. Manage forests pests through integrated methods, supplemented by direct control when necessary to prevent imminent damage.
5. Provide information about forest health prevention and protection.

##### Strategic Accomplishments:

1. Efforts to Address Invasive Species

Early detection and rapid response to exotic invasive forest pests is a primary objective of MDNR, Forest Resources Division's (FRD's) Forest Health Program. Beech bark disease, oak wilt, emerald ash borer, invasive forest plants and other organisms threaten to permanently alter the state's forest resource, reducing value and productivity. In some cases, exotic invasives threaten to permanently eliminate entire tree species from urban and forest landscapes.

Recent detections of hemlock woolly adelgid in the west-central Lower Peninsula have raised concerns that this pest could become permanently established, threatening the state's 173 million hemlock trees (2014 Forest Inventory and Assessment data) and the thousands of landscape hemlock trees planted in Michigan's urban areas. Efforts are underway to delimit the extent of the infestation in cooperation with Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), Michigan State University (MSU) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). High-risk state forest land – including state recreation areas – is being surveyed, and management options are being evaluated in the event hemlock woolly adelgid is found.



Oak wilt suppression activities continue on state-managed land in the northern Lower and Upper peninsulas. Oak wilt is a serious disease of red oak trees and has been found in several counties throughout Michigan. Aerial and ground surveys are used to detect, confirm and delimit infected areas, and a vibratory plow is used to break root grafts responsible for underground spread. Following the plowing, infected trees are cut and processed to minimize overland spread of the fungus by sap beetles. Nearly 50,000 feet of plow line will be installed in fall 2015 to slow the spread of oak wilt.



In conjunction with the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program, FRD's Forest Health Program is partnering with MDARD's Forestry Assistance Program to assist with oak wilt control on private land. This effort will greatly increase the efforts to reduce the impacts of oak wilt on Michigan's oak resource.

In addition, a terrestrial invasive species biologist has been hired to coordinate and provide technical assistance with Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program projects. This position is coordinated jointly with the MDNR's Forest Resources and Wildlife divisions.

## 2. Annual Forest Health Highlights

The MDNR, FRD's Forest Health Program puts together the *Forest Health Highlights* report each year. The report provides a comprehensive overview of forest health challenges facing Michigan's forest resources, both urban and rural. It also provides a summary of cooperative survey and research efforts with MDARD, MSU, Michigan Technological University, the USFS and the U.S. Department of Agriculture-APHIS.

The annual Forest Health Highlights can be found at [www.michigan.gov/foresthealth](http://www.michigan.gov/foresthealth).



### **Issue #3 in Michigan; Reduce Wildfire Risk and Improve Public Safety**

#### **Key Attributes:**

Key attributes for maintaining public benefits include forests that are in a productive and healthy condition and are protected by properly equipped, trained and effectively used wildland firefighting resources.

#### **Associated Strategies:**

1. Partner with other states to assist in protecting the public and forest resources of Michigan through the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact to: provide advanced fire training to employees; develop and produce wildfire prevention materials; augment our suppression capabilities with compact resources; and develop technical improvement that will improve preparedness planning and prediction of daily fire risk.
2. Partner with the Michigan Interagency Wildfire Protection Association to enable federal, state, and local wildfire agency coordination of pre-suppression planning of communication, contact information, equipment availability, aerial detection, and wildfire prevention efforts including media interaction and development of prevention products.
3. Partner with MSU Extension to deliver the Firewise message across fire-prone landscapes in Michigan.
4. Seek grant opportunities for:
  - Mitigating wildfire risk, including reducing hazardous fuels, preventing unintended wildfire ignitions, Firewise education and developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans.
  - Enhancing wildfire suppression capabilities by improving the outfitting, training and communication with local fire departments, including screening and acquisition of excess military equipment, and funding to train and outfit MDNR employees to national standards outlined by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group 310-1 guidelines.
  - Using new technology to enhance our ability to plan for wildfire suppression, predict fire behavior and manage the wildfire program in Michigan.

## Strategic Accomplishments:

### 1. Firewise Program

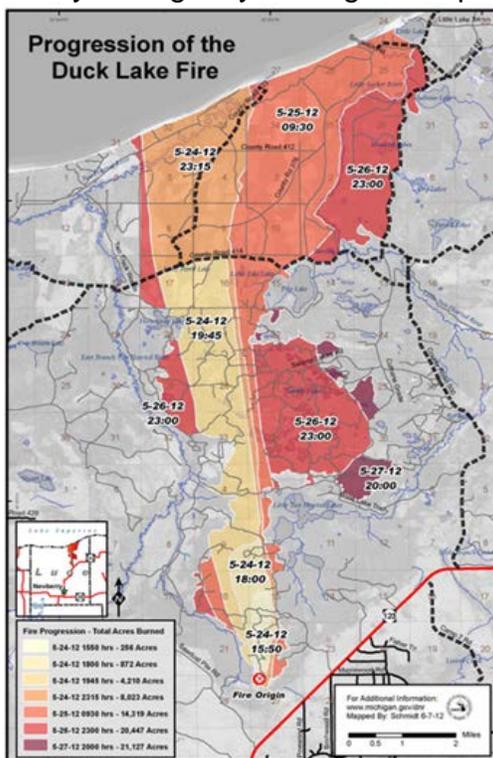
Wildfire prevention efforts in Michigan have made great advancements with the partnership between the MDNR, FRD and MSU Extension in the development and promotion of Community Wildfire Protection Plans and Firewise.

The strong partnership between MDNR and MSU has allowed for widespread prevention efforts across the state and the promotion of Firewise concepts around individual homes, as well as at the community level with the Au Sable River Estates being the first in the state to achieve National designation as a Firewise Community.

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan efforts have also made great progress with 11 new plans completed since 2010. The planning process has brought leaders in the fire service and emergency management from federal, state and local levels to the table to address issues and concerns for their respective counties. The developed Community Wildfire Protection Plans will aid in future wildfire response, along with county planning and zoning enhancements and hazard mitigation efforts all aimed at the reduction of wildfire occurrence and impacts, should one occur.

### 2. Duck Lake Fire

In May 2012, lightning in Luce County in Michigan's eastern Upper Peninsula sparked what would become Michigan's third-largest wildfire in modern history. The well-known Duck Lake fire consumed 21,069 acres and destroyed 136 structures before being brought under control by firefighting crews from across the state, as well as resources from Wisconsin and the MDNR's federal partners. Although extreme fire behavior and rapid rates of spread were observed, quick evacuation efforts lead to no loss of life or serious injuries much in part to the ongoing pre-suppression planning efforts of the local firefighting resources and county emergency management personnel.



Even though the fire directly affected a large portion of this small community, the residents of Newberry and the surrounding area pulled together in a remarkable fashion to support and welcome the fire crews. There was not one need that was not met with the overwhelming cooperation of other support agencies and the “built-on-the-fly fire support center.”



Every morning and evening when the fires crews would travel to and from the fire-line, they were greeted with streets filled with citizens waving and cheering them on showing their never ending support for the army of fire-fighters that had invaded their little community.



When all was said and done there was a total of 300 personnel who served on the Duck Lake fire and a total of 42.6 miles of fire-line was constructed to help contain the blaze; and although losses were great on this fire, the trees will grow back and homes will be rebuilt, but the relationships established will last forever.

### 3. New Technology

The Forest Fire Experiment Station (FFES) has recently produced a “masher” for use on Marshmaster units. The purpose of this piece of equipment is to provide increased capability to conduct prescribed burns and fire suppression operations in areas of heavy *Phragmites* fuels. This non-native, invasive species has taken over many wetland areas along the Great Lakes and other areas. It is a highly-hazardous fuel that can sustain large fires and high rates of spread.



### 4. Fire Suppression

**Prescribed Fire:** MDNR, FRD has an active prescribed fire program. Prescribed fire is used for both silvicultural, hazard fuel reduction and ecosystem restoration/maintenance purposes. The FRD works closely with both Wildlife and Parks and Recreation divisions to coordinate burns to be completed, personnel for burn teams and fire staffing coverage to maximize the number of burns that can be accomplished.

Year	Completed Burns	Acres Burned
2011	90	5,518.5
2012	44	2,399.5
2013	40	2,449.5
2014	107	10,399
2015	134	9,228.5
Total	415	29,995
Average	83	5,999



***Shared Investigation Resources:*** MDNR, FRD has been providing assistance to the Huron-Manistee National Forest to investigate wildfires in northeast lower Michigan. This provides trained fire investigators to the USFS and provides additional experience and competency for MDNR fire investigators.

***Shared Wildland Fire Training:*** MDNR, FRD provides shared training opportunities with Michigan National Forests, the Seney Wildlife Refuge, Michigan Agency Bureau of Indian Affairs and local fire departments. In addition, FRD works through the Michigan Prescribed Fire Council to provide training opportunities to non-government and other non-profits who are seeking to use prescribed fire to manage and restore native ecosystems in the state. This maximizes fire training in the state by sharing both instructor resources and training slots across agencies.

***Enhanced Fire Department Training:*** MDNR, FRD is embarking on a project to provide additional training opportunities for local fire departments, in cooperation with the Michigan Firefighters Training Council and the state firefighter certification agency. This effort includes providing advanced wildland fire training courses that have not previously been available to fire department personnel, as well as additional opportunities to obtain wildland fire training. The project will also include regional academies within the state to provide advanced training.

***Increasing Access to Federal Excess Personal Property/Department of Defense Equipment:*** MDNR, FRD has created a new website to provide enhanced information about its FEPP/DOD equipment program. Fire departments now have [online access](#) to the necessary forms and procedures for obtaining equipment, a list of local contacts for information, examples of the types of equipment available and information on converting military vehicles for fire use.

**Prevention:** To assist with fire prevention messaging and making residents and visitors of Michigan aware of what the daily fire danger is, new technology has greatly played a role in that effort with the placement of electronic Smokey Bear fire danger signs at strategic Michigan Department of Transportation rest areas. The new signs controlled by computer, allow for the current fire danger to be updated daily from the nearest office, unlike the old manual signs where an employee would have to be on site to change the information. This advancement has allowed messaging at locations previously not feasible in the past and increases the ability to reach more people across the state with the current fire conditions.



#### **IV. NATIONAL PRIORITY OR THEME #3: ENHANCE PUBLIC BENEFITS FROM TREES AND FORESTS**

##### **Issue #1 in Michigan: Maintain Markets for Use of Forest Products**

###### **Key Attributes:**

1. The following are critical influences on maintaining Michigan's forest product markets. They include infrastructure, a diversity of products and markets, recruitment and investment, institutional support, permitting and public support.
2. Infrastructure is required to transport products throughout the supply and production chain. A diversity of products and markets are important to enable firms to profitably take advantage of the diversity of tree species and mixed products which are harvested from Michigan's forests. The importance of this diversity is likely to increase as forests continue to mature and many of them are managed to achieve more mixed stands.
3. Similarly, it is important that recruitment and investments occur from the logging operation through the various stages of wood product manufacturing. One concern is the loss of logging capacity as this sector has become more capital intensive and market downturns have led to fewer firms. There has also been concern about fast-changing markets as oil prices have widely fluctuated, energy subsidy programs have changed incentives and fostered more attention on the use of biomass for energy.

4. Institutional support in academia and government is important for the maintenance of markets. Such support influences sound policies and regulations, for example in the area of permitting. Research and development, and extension activities promote keeping up with new technology and information.
5. Public support also continues to be an ongoing concern for wood fiber production. Familiarity and acceptance of resource-extractive economic sectors and activities is important especially as society becomes predominantly more urban (and suburban), economies are more service-oriented, people become more removed from rural extractive industries and ecological concerns such as habitat loss and climate change become more pervasive.

### **Associated Strategies:**

1. Continue to pursue and support greater collaboration across agencies and stakeholders (some of the examples fostered in recent years include the Forest Management Advisory Council, the Great Lakes Forestry Alliance, the Tri-State Summit (MI, MN and WI), the development of Woody Biomass Harvesting Guidelines and a Soil and Water Quality Guidelines manual). Continue to support and facilitate participation in hands-on training and/or demonstration of new techniques or practices which facilitate sound, sustainable use of wood fiber.
2. Continue to support and communicate assessments of current and projected wood fiber use and market projections and resolution of concerns regarding use.
3. Support forest certification standards.
4. Continue to be involved in energy-related policy and economic development efforts. This includes the need to address wood availability concerns through understanding broader energy market and energy efficiency concerns.
5. Encourage the development of ecosystem services markets through grants, an ecosystem services bank or partnerships.

### **Strategic Accomplishments:**

1. Michigan Regional State Forest Management Plans  
Michigan's forest resources provide the foundation of forest product markets which drive local economies throughout Michigan. This forest resource includes one of the largest amounts of growth in excess of removals in the nation and probably the greatest amount of any state in the eastern U.S.



The three regional state forest management plans play a very large role in helping to ensure continued certification of the state forest and in ensuring a continuous supply of forest resources to help stabilize markets. In turn, those forest product markets provide numerous public benefits, in addition to good paying jobs, from the provision of habitat through enabling the existence of community infrastructure and quality of life. The value of timber resources derived from our state forest allows sustainable forest management options to be implemented on-the-ground.

### **Issue #3 in Michigan: Provide Effective Conservation Outreach for Private Forest Lands**

#### **Key Attributes:**

The forest resource contains a diversity of ecosystems across the state. Each human demand on the resource carries its own set of habitat/species mix requirements. Citizens must have reasonable access to these ecosystems in order to form positive attitudes toward natural processes in general and conservation practices in particular.

#### **Associated Strategies:**

1. Identify and clarify a common set of goals and desired outcomes associated with conservation outreach for various targeted audiences, youth, forest landowners and resource professionals (including loggers).
2. Examine initiatives and programs in other states and regions that successfully demonstrate effective conservation outreach.
3. Develop a web and media presence (including social media) on current conservation issues and opportunities.
4. Conduct education outreach regarding non-point source pollution prevention for loggers, professionals and landowners.

#### **Strategic Accomplishments:**

1. Outdoor Adventure Center in Detroit

The Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) opened to the public in summer 2015 and is off to a successful beginning. It is already seeing more visitors than initially projected. In addition to visitors to the OAC, numerous business and corporate groups have used the site to host meetings and events. The community can rent the OAC for birthday parties, dinners and special events. While this helps to generate revenue for operation costs, more importantly, it exposes these visitors to nature, the outdoors, recreation and environment. It provides for three floors of exhibits, displays and simulators that present messages that people might not otherwise receive.

After seeing a busy summer with numerous visitors on a daily basis, the OAC is gearing up for more group visits and school visits. Certainly, upcoming educational presentations and topic-related activities will continue to spread an outdoors and environmentally friendly message to OAC visitors.

One of the more popular areas at the OAC is the firefighting airplane exhibit. Working closely with the MDNR, FRD and the Weber Group, a donated airplane was renovated, refurbished and detailed to resemble a plane used by the MDNR in carrying out its fire prevention, detection and suppression activities. Visitors can sit in the plane and pretend they are the pilot, co-pilot or passenger. Recorded radio conversation of MDNR staff performing their jobs can be heard while visitors “fly” the plane. Additionally, some of the knobs and controls can be moved to enhance the experience.



## 2. New Web Page and Social Media Accounts

To most effectively and efficiently communicate with its customers, stakeholders and the general public, the MDNR, FRD has committed to improve the design of its website. With an increasing number of people using smart phones and other mobile devices to access the web, all content has been redesigned to ensure that it is responsive. This means that the content will adjust accordingly to fit the screen regardless of the device being used to view the site. Web content and design are also being streamlined to make content more visually appealing and navigation more user-friendly. The MDNR places a strong emphasis on meeting accessibility standards with all content; this ensures users with all capabilities are able to access and enjoy the content.

The MDNR has a social media coordinator who works extensively with each division to ensure announcements, news, videos and photos are posted to reach wide audiences. The MDNR reaches tens of thousands of followers using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Flickr and Pinterest. This allows a direct avenue of communication for the public to interact with, and ask questions about, MDNR activities.

In addition to these efforts, the MDNR disseminates traditional press releases and other news using the GovDelivery email notification system. This system allows users to customize the news they receive so they are not bombarded with unwanted messages. The FRD currently uses eight forestry-specific lists and two statewide news lists (statewide and Upper Peninsula news) to send close to 100 division-specific bulletins each year to more than 40,000 subscribers.

## **Issue #7 in Michigan: Maintain Forest Ecosystems for Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat**

### **Key Attributes:**

Three key criteria are critical for producing public benefits from the conservation of biodiversity: 1) Functionality, 2) Quality and condition, and 3) Socio-economic criterion. The functionality criterion includes consideration of the landscape context, size and connectivity of natural communities. The quality and condition criterion is a measure of the composition, structure and natural processes of natural communities. The socio-economic criterion includes consideration of management costs, opportunity costs and benefits from natural communities.

There are four key forest attributes sought to benefit some wildlife species:

1. The provision of hard mast (particularly oak and hickory trees) which is high in fats, carbohydrates and good sources of proteins that is available over long periods of the year. These are used disproportionately by waterfowl, upland game birds, deer, bear and squirrels.
2. Short rotation young forests (particularly aspen) provide summer and winter forage for deer, elk and grouse that is not accessible in mature forests. They also provide essential breeding habitat for grouse and woodcock.
3. Structurally diverse forests with uneven age-class distributions (particularly northern hardwoods) which provide food, cover and other habitat needs for forest song-birds, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals, many of which are species at risk.
4. The presence of mesic/lowland conifers (particularly white pine and hemlock) provides food, breeding habitat and winter cover for song birds, deer, bobcat, red squirrel and salamanders. Lowland white cedar provides winter food and thermal cover for deer.

### **Associated Strategies:**

1. Outreach to partners in areas where there are identified biodiversity values.
2. Target Forest Legacy conservation easements or fee acquisition in areas where there are identified high biodiversity values on private forest land.
3. Use landowner assistance programs, such as the Landowner Incentive Program, the Forest Stewardship Program, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Environmental Quality Incentive Program and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program to assist landowners in managing private forest land for habitat for wildlife species identified by Michigan's Wildlife Action Plan, federal and state endangered species lists and the state featured species list.

### **Strategic Accomplishments:**

1. Forest Legacy Program  
The Forest Legacy program accomplished the acquisition of 3,810 acres at Crisp Point in the eastern Upper Peninsula which has biodiversity values that are now protected. See the Crisp Point details under Theme#1, Issue #2 above.

## 2. Regional Forest Management Plans

Michigan's state forest is co-managed by the FRD and Wildlife Division for the purpose of providing forest products and wildlife habitat. The three regional state forest management plans (RSFMPs) provide landscape-level operational direction for management of state forest resources by building on the direction provided in the state-level plan (2008 Michigan State Forest Management Plan) through the provision of cover type goals and objectives conditioned by wildlife habitat specifications for identified featured species.



This information and direction is provided for each of the 101 management areas that make up the state forest in the three regions: the western Upper Peninsula, the eastern Upper Peninsula and the northern Lower Peninsula. Each management area has a separate write-up that addresses the major cover types and the selected featured species.

In addition, each management area contains sections that address the management of: rare species, rare communities and special resource areas; as well as forest health, aquatic resources, fire and public access and recreation.

Implementing the three regional forest management plans demonstrates the MDNR's commitment to sustainable forest management and the conservation of biological diversity; and serves as a model for other landowners, their agents and landowner assistance programs focused on sustainable forest management such as the Forest Stewardship, Community and Urban Forestry, Environmental Quality Incentive and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive programs.



## **Issue #8 in Michigan: Maintain and Enhance Access to Recreational Activities on Forest Lands**

### **Key Attributes:**

Assess to recreation on private forest land is very often dependent upon the willingness of the owner to grant such a right. These rights are necessary for the establishment of a well-developed and maintained interconnected system of public land and water trails which can support a viable and sustainable statewide trail system and tourism industry.

The ability of private forest land to provide habitat is also a key condition. Private forests play a large role in providing a wide spectrum of plant and wildlife habitat conditions. Habitat needs are highly variable and dependent upon the life history characteristics of each species. For wildlife species that depend upon forests from all or a portion of their habitat, the key attribute is the permanence of the forest itself. A secondary attribute is the condition of the forest, in terms of successional state and vegetative composition and structural characteristics.

### **Associated Strategies:**

1. Actively solicit and foster support and understanding from private forest landowners of the significance and benefits of public trail development and designation.
2. Target acquisition of permanent rights in private forest lands for public trail use at priority locations in the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula to achieve critical linkages in regional and statewide trail networks.
3. Pursue trail acquisitions consistent with trail initiatives outlined in Michigan's 2008-2012 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan 2008.
4. Provide financial incentives to private landowners to obtain access rights.
5. Provide information to enable recreation on private lands.
6. Use multi-media marketing to promote outdoor recreational opportunities.

### **Strategic Accomplishments:**

#### **1. Iron-Belle Trail**

Michigan's Iron Belle Trail is the latest addition to Michigan's thousands of miles of recreational trails. This new trail links the wealth of existing trails, helps fill gaps where needed and celebrates the partnerships that have developed and are maintaining the trails. The trail creates opportunities for rural economic development, healthy recreation and awareness of Michigan's natural resources; and there is great excitement about the opportunity to participate in Michigan's Iron Belle Trail in every community.

Two routes make up Michigan's Iron Belle Trail: one for hikers and one for bicyclists. Both routes stretch from Detroit in the southeast part of the state to Ironwood in the northwest, each taking a separate route to complete the journey. Most of the hiking route will follow the North Country National Scenic Trail. The trail traverses the west side of the Lower Peninsula and hugs much of Lake Superior in the Upper Peninsula. Altogether, the hiking trail will be 1,259 miles in length. The bicycle route (774 miles) will use existing multi-use trails that have been developed by local units of government, counties and the state and will follow US-2 in the Upper Peninsula which is a designated national bicycling route.

More than 60% of both routes (bicycling and hiking) are already completed, and partners are working to establish temporary connectors that will be made permanent as resources become available. Federal, state and local units of government are working to complete the trail by acquiring trail easements where possible. Detailed maps showing which segments are completed are available at <http://michigan.gov/dnrtrails>.



## Issue #9 in Michigan: Reforestation of Urban and Ex-Urban Areas

### Key Attributes:

Maintaining and expanding healthy tree cover in urban and ex-urban areas is a key attribute that is necessary to maximize myriad benefits provided by trees and forests.

### Associated Strategies:

1. Improve the state Urban and Community Forestry program's capacity to spatially assess, analyze and prioritize areas of need using various tools (e.g., GIS, remote sensing, etc.).
2. Create appropriate outreach and education messages for urban and community audiences related to conserving private forest lands.
3. Target distribution tree-planting grant assistance to priority areas in the following order:
  - a. Where urban and ex-urban areas overlap.
  - b. Urban areas.
  - c. Ex-urban areas.
  - d. Tree City USA communities where tree removals exceeded trees planted.

## Strategic Accomplishments:

- Michigan Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) Implementation Committee Wins Award as the State's Forests Keep Growing – Even in Downtown Detroit.

Michigan's forests are expanding, even in unlikely places like Detroit. The Michigan SFI Implementation Committee is part of this success story and a big reason why it won the national SFI Implementation Committee Annual Achievement Award in 2014.

The MDNR's Urban and Community Forestry program connected the state SFI committee with the Detroit nonprofit, The Greening of Detroit, and various other partners to improve Detroit urban forests and revitalize the city through tree planting projects. Through The Greening's Citizen Forester Program, volunteers plant 4,000-6,000 trees annually. The program helps volunteers to identify and plant trees that improve the urban environment.

The first year of this relationship resulted in 138 volunteers, 24 Citizen Foresters, and 10 Greening of Detroit staff working together to plant over 100 trees in the City. It was also an excellent opportunity for Michigan' SFI committee to speak to the volunteers about the importance of sustainable forest management and the work SFI does throughout North America to ensure future forests for everybody. In addition, the Michigan SFI committee has agreed to donate \$5,000 to The Greening of Detroit to support their ongoing Citizen Forester training program and helped sponsor the attendance of 120 Greening of Detroit Green Corps students to a first annual Green Corp/MI SFI tour in Grayling, Michigan. This is truly a relationship of mutual benefit, as it helps expose audiences from both urban and rural areas of the state to issues of shared interest.

