

**Michigan Department of Natural Resources
1994 Public Act 451, Section 52506 Report
Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-15**

The Department of Natural Resources (Department) is required to provide a report to the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) and the Legislature that details the following:

(a) The number of harvestable acres in the state forest, as determined by the certification program under section 52506.

Forest certification systems evaluate whether harvesting is being conducted in accordance with sustainable forestry principles that consider a broad range of environmental, social, and economic criteria. Forest certification systems do not determine the number of harvestable acres. The 2013 Regional State Forest Management Plans (RSFMPs) for the northern Lower Peninsula, eastern Upper Peninsula, and western Upper Peninsula regions address the planning requirements of Part 525 and forest certification systems. The 2013 RSFMPs collectively propose an average of 61,000 acres prepared for harvest each year for fiscal years 2016-2025. The 2008 State Forest Management Plan (SFMP) was the relevant plan for FY 2015, calling for a minimum of 53,000 acres prepared for harvest.

(b) The number of acres of the state forest that were harvested and the number of cords of wood that were harvested from the state forest.

There were 54,606 acres of state forest harvested in FY 2015, producing an estimated volume of 838,900 cords. Approximately 59,866 acres were prepared for timber sale auction by the Department, with an estimated volume of 1,055,000 cords.

(c) The number of acres of state-owned lands owned or controlled by the Department, other than state forest lands that were harvested, and the number of cords of wood that were harvested from those lands.

On non-state forest lands owned or controlled by the Department, there were 865 acres harvested in FY 2015, producing an estimated volume of 19,376 cords. Approximately 775 acres were prepared for timber sale auction by the Department, with an estimated volume of 16,240 cords.

(d) Efforts by the Department to promote recreational opportunities in the state forest.

The state forest recreation and trails programs were moved from the Forest Resources Division to the Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) effective January 1, 2012. Through a Director's Land Use Order, state forest campgrounds and trails were designated as state recreation areas. This designation required visitors to have the Recreation Passport for access to all non-motorized trailheads and state forest campgrounds.

During FY 2015, the recreation and trails programs were promoted at outdoor shows; recreation conferences such as the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association conference; the Michigan Snowmobile Association meetings; and through various Department press releases, publications, and the Department website.

In addition to the off-road vehicle (ORV) and snowmobile trail maps available for download on the Department website, the Department is continuing its collaboration with ORV manufacturers to provide and enhance Michigan's designated motorized trail systems on a free mobile phone application.

The Department has embarked on a comprehensive media campaign to communicate changes associated with the restructuring of hunting, fishing, and ORV licenses that took effect on March 1, 2014. Efforts continued to actively communicate these changes and promote outcomes of the license restructuring in 2015.

The Department established two free ORV riding weekends to coincide with Free Fishing Weekend (June 13-14) and Trails Week (August 22-23). During these weekends, ORV riders can ride the trails for free in an effort to promote the trail system.

Press releases on camping and trails activities and recreation improvement projects on state lands are issued regularly throughout the year, as are seasonal-themed news articles for state forest camping and trail recreation opportunities.

The Department continues to collaborate with state agencies and other units of government and non-profit organizations to promote, develop, and acquire trails, including work with the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance; the Top of Michigan Trails Council; the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program; the National Park Service North Country National Scenic Trail; the North Country Trail Association; the USDA National Forest; the Michigan Economic Development Corporation; and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

The Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council (MSTAC) was renamed the Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC) with the Governor's signing of the multi-bill, Pure Michigan Trails package in June 2014. The MTAC advises the Governor and the Department on the creation, development, operation, and maintenance of motorized and non-motorized trails in accordance with the 2013 Michigan Comprehensive Trails Plan (www.michigan.gov/trailplan). The State Trails Implementation Plan, which was approved by the Department Director at the January 2014 Natural Resources Commission meeting, lays out priority actions the Department and MTAC will take over five years to sustain Michigan's title as the Trail State.

With the help of many partners, the Department's Wildlife Division is developing a series of intensively managed, walk-in access ruffed grouse hunting areas across the northern Lower and Upper Peninsulas. The areas are called Grouse Enhanced Management Systems (GEMS). The goals of this work are to provide unique hunting opportunities, promote hunter recruitment and retention, expand local economies, provide a destination point for the traveling wing-shooter, and accelerate timber harvest opportunities. The Department is committed to developing 13 GEMS in the northern Lower Peninsula and Upper Peninsula by 2016. The DNR's MiHUNT web application shows the nearly 4 million acres of State Forest Land open to public hunting along with the habitat type information useful to planning a hunting trip. MiHUNT received nearly 200,000 visits in 2015.

(e) Information on the public's utilization of the recreational opportunities offered by the state forest.

A total of 354,333 ORV licenses and trail permits were sold in FY 2015, which reflects the new ORV license structure that went into effect March 1, 2014.

There were 142,021 snowmobile trail permits sold during the 2014-15 season (September 1, 2014 through July 31, 2015), a decrease of 3,933 trail permits from the 2013-14 season.

Over \$1.1 million in state forest camping revenue was collected in FY 2015. The FY 2015 use and revenue data was slightly more than FY 2014. The Forest Recreation Account received \$861,200 from Recreation Passport sales, a \$112,000 increase from FY 2014.

(f) Efforts by the Department to promote wildlife habitat in the state forest.

The Wildlife Division works jointly with the Forest Resources Division in developing regional state management plans and the compartment review process to ensure wildlife habitat management goals are reflected in the stand level treatments that are approved. In FY 2015, the Wildlife Division participated in reviewing about 400,000 acres of state forest to determine wildlife management needs. Beyond vegetative management reviews, this acreage includes consideration for habitat improvement and habitat planning on sites with specific plant and animal concerns. This is accomplished via our featured wildlife species that are used to help direct management and to ensure clarity on evaluations of management.

In addition, Wildlife Division conducted intensive wildlife habitat management in the northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula. The Wildlife Division managed 6,373 acres to create or maintain forest openings, which provide critical habitat for wildlife. Over 3,000 acres of intensive grassland and/or savanna management and over 5,800 acres of intensive wetland habitat management was conducted on state lands. Over 36,731 mast bearing shrubs and/or trees were planted on state land for wildlife food. Many of these trees were red and bur oak in areas affected by beech bark disease.

RSFMPs for the northern Lower Peninsula and eastern and western Upper Peninsula provide direction to multi-divisional field staff for timber and wildlife habitat management of state forest lands.

(g) Status of the plan and whether the Department recommends any changes in the plan.

Operational implementation of the strategic 2008 SFMP has been enabled through the RSFMPs. The SFMP was amended on October 9, 2014 to add aggregated data for projected acreages and expected treatments for cover types provided by the RSFMPs, as well as to update several categories of High Conservation Value Areas (including Ecological Reference Areas and Dedicated Habitat Areas). There are no current recommended changes to the plan.

(h) Status of certification efforts required in section 52505 and, beginning in 2006, a definitive statement of whether the Department is maintaining certification of the entire state forest.

The state forest system was originally awarded forest certification in December 2005 under the auspices of Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) and Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC). A recertification field audit was conducted by NSF-International (in partnership with SCS Global Services) on September 28 to October 2, 2015, which resulted in recommendations for continued certification under new FSC and SFI certificates. There are two minor FSC Corrective Action Requests (CARs) and five FSC Observations, and two SFI CARs and two SFI Opportunities for Improvement (OFI). The Department is responding to address the CARs, Observations, and OFIs by the prescribed deadlines in order to maintain certification.

(i) A description of any activities that have been undertaken on forest pilot project areas described in section 52511.

Four forest pilot project areas were established in 2006, as required by section 52511. The Department established a team which developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the necessary contracts, implementing bids, providing guidance, and conducting the project evaluation. The RFP was released in March 2011. Bids were received and contracts awarded in the fall of 2011.

The four pilot areas are as follows:

- **Shingleton Management Unit:** Compartment 167 Pilot, Stands 3, 5, 7, 22; Alger County, T48N, R16W, Section 31, N1/2 of NW1/4, SW1/4 of NW1/4, Schoolcraft County, T47N R16W, Section 6, W1/2 and Section 7, N1/2 of NW1/4; (approximately 239 acres to treat) – **Awarded to Upper Michigan Land Management & Wildlife Services in the amount of \$30,114.00**
- **Shingleton Management Unit:** Compartment 73 Pilot, Stands 20, 23, 25, 26, 27 and 48; T42N, R15W, Section 3, E1/2 W1/2, E1/2 and Section 10, NW1/4, NW1/4NE1/4; (approximately 316 acres to treat) – **Awarded to Upper Michigan Land Management & Wildlife Services in the amount of \$91,008.00**
- **Grayling Management Unit:** Compartment 190 Pilot, Stands 20, 22 and 27; T25N, R04W, Section 16, NE 1/4, W1/2SE1/4, NW1/4 SE1/4, E1/2 SW1/4; (136 acres to treat) – **No bids received**
- **Gaylord Management Unit:** Compartment 145 Pilot, Stands 32, 41 and 43, T33N, R03W, Section 6, entire except the SE1/4 of SE1/4; 640 acres (272 acres to treat) – **Awarded to Metcalfe Forestry in the amount of \$40,813.60**

All work in the three pilot areas that were awarded has been completed. Metcalfe Forestry and Upper Michigan Land Management & Wildlife Services are working on the reporting requirements of their contracts, which should be completed in the next few months.