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STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

LANSING



REBECCA A. HUMPHRIES
DIRECTOR

January 11, 2010

The Honorable Michelle McManus, Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Natural Resources
S-2 Capitol Building
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

The Honorable Michael Lahti, Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Natural Resources
House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7514

Dear Senator McManus and Representative Lahti:

Pursuant to Section 52506, PA 451 of 1994, attached is the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Fiscal Year 2008-09 report, addressing forestry issues.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Sharon M. Schafer, Chief
Budget and Support Services
517-373-1750

Attachment

cc: Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Members
House Appropriations Subcommittee Members
Mr. Josh Sefton, Senate Fiscal Agency
Ms. Viola Wild, House Fiscal Agency
Mr. Robert Emerson, State Budget Director, Department of
Management and Budget (DMB)
Mr. Jacques McNeely, DMB
Ms. Jennifer Harrison, DMB
Director Rebecca A. Humphries, DNR
Ms. Arminda Koch, Resource Management Deputy, DNR
Mr. Rodney Stokes, Chief of Staff, DNR
Mr. Daniel Eichinger, Legislative Liaison, DNR
Mr. Mark Bouvy, DNR

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**Michigan Department of Natural Resources
1994 Public Act 451, Section 52506, Report
Fiscal Year (FY) 2008-09**

The Department of Natural Resources (Department) is required to provide a report to the Natural Resources Commission 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 do not determine the number of harvestable acres. Systems evaluate whether harvesting is being conducted in accordance with sustainable forestry principles that consider a broad range of environmental, social, and economic criteria. The 2008 Michigan State Forest Management Plan (April 10, 2008) addresses the planning requirements of Part 525 and forest certification systems, and allows for a minimum of 53,000 acres prepared for harvest each year.

(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 approximately 47,700 acres of state forest harvested by the timber industry in FY 2008-09 that yielded an estimated volume of 736,000 cords. Approximately 57,200 acres were prepared for timber sale auction by the Department, yielding an estimated volume of 832,000 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.

The number of acres owned or controlled by the Department, other than state forest lands, that were harvested for timber in FY 2008-09 was 244. The number of cords harvested from these lands was 4,367.

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

The state forest recreation and trails programs were promoted at outdoor shows; recreation conferences, such as the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association conference; the Michigan State Fair and Upper Peninsula State Fair; and through various Department publications and the Department website.

Trail maps of the ORV and Snowmobile trail systems are on the Department website in a format that permits public printing and use of the maps.

Equestrian riding and camping opportunities are highlighted on an expanded web page, along with information on a project to test new trail surface materials for equestrian trail construction.

Press releases on camping and trails activities and improvement projects are issued regularly, as are seasonal theme news articles for state forest camping and trails recreation opportunities.

Public trail planning efforts were initiated for two rail-trails, with several public listening sessions held to take trail user input.

The Department worked with outside agencies and organizations to promote, acquire, and develop trails, including work with the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service.

Michigan was the host state for the 2009 Mid-American Trails Conference, a gathering of over 300 trail advocates from nine Midwest states, sponsored by the National Park Service. The Department was a supporter and had several speakers address the conference attendees on Michigan's designated 12,645-mile trail system.

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

State forest camping use was up slightly in 2009 based on \$1.24 million in fee revenues collected compared to \$1.21 million in 2008. This increase in use was remarkable because 19 state forest campgrounds were closed; 12 were closed because of mid-year General Fund budget reductions and 7 were closed for facilities improvement construction projects. Specific camper registration data for 2009 is currently not available, as the database is being updated.

An Assessment of Snowmobiling in Michigan by Snowmobilers with Michigan Trail Permits, 2009, was conducted by Michigan State University. This report summarizes 2008-09 survey information from randomly selected Michigan trail permit holders and looks at trend information about Michigan snowmobiling by comparing information with a previous 1996-97 survey by the same senior researchers.

There were 198,364 snowmobile trail permits sold during the 2008-09 season (9/1/2008 through 5/31/2009), a slight decline of 1,264 trail permits from the 2007-08 season.

There were 204,154 Off-Road Vehicle trail licenses sold during license year 2009, an increase of 17,263 licenses from license year 2008.

Nearly 100 use permits were issued for a variety of recreational special events such as dog sled, ski, mountain bike, and snowshoe races; dog trials; skeet shooting; and equestrian trail rides on state forest lands.

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

Under a co-management agreement, Wildlife Division works jointly with Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division in the compartment review process to ensure wildlife habitat management goals are reflected in the stand level treatments that are approved. In FY 2008-09, Wildlife Division participated in reviewing 399,516 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 exemplary natural features, endangered/threatened species, or natural areas contained within state forests.

Operational planning efforts for state forest lands are being updated. These efforts are focused on completing Regional State Forest Management Plans that will provide direction to field staff for management of state forest lands. Efforts directed towards ensuring biodiversity, conservation, and wildlife habitat restoration, along with the associated recreation of hunting and trapping, will be reflected in these plans.

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

Staff continue work on drafting Regional State Forest Management Plans (RSFMPs), which will enable operational implementation of the strategic 2008 State Forest Management Plan (SFMP). There are no recommended changes to the SFMP until RSFMPs are completed.

(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 awarded forest certification in December 2005 under the auspices of Sustainable Forestry Initiative[®] (SFI) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Subsequently, combined SFI and FSC annual surveillance audits have been conducted every October in 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. These audits have verified that the Department continues to be in conformance with SFI and FSC standards.

The Department is monitoring and continually improving sustainable state forest land management. The Department is maintaining SFI and FSC forest certification of the state forest system, excluding minor acreages that are not under the exclusive, direct control of the Department, e.g. the Grayling Military Reserve and forest lands leased to Luce County (original 15-year lease in 1984 and one-time renewal in 1999).

Certification under FSC and SFI is for a five year period; therefore, the Department must recertify the state forest system by December 2010 in order to maintain its FSC and SFI certification certificates.

(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 has established a team which is developing the necessary contracts, implementing bids, providing guidance, and conducting the project evaluation. Contracts are currently being drafted and reviewed, and are expected to be bid out in 2010.