Growth Rings:
Rooted in the past, growing toward the future

Forest Resources Division

Strategic Plan

2019-2023

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

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From the Chief

Managing more than 4 million acres of state forest land, providing fire protection on over 20 million acres, monitoring forest health and fighting invasive insects and diseases are important tasks that will have a big impact on Michigan's future.

But the Forest Resources Division does even more! Staffers help cities, towns and private landowners manage their trees and forests through grant programs and partnerships, ensuring that forests will be healthy for generations to come.

It doesn't stop there. Forests provide the backdrop for almost all outdoor activities. Michigan's state forests include 145 state forest campgrounds with nearly 3,000 campsites, 7,000 miles of canoe streams, thousands of miles of groomed snowmobile trails, 880 miles of hiking and biking paths and vast spaces to hunt and fish.

Maintaining roads, bridges and culverts provides an infrastructure challenge. About 13,000 miles of DNR roads provide access to bird watchers, mushroom and berry pickers, hikers, bikers, and people who want to hunt, fish and camp or simply get from one point to another.

We want the people of Michigan to enjoy and respect the forests as much as we do. That's why communication and relationship building is increasingly important. One major effort over the past two years has been improving the FRD website to make it more user-friendly, interactive and packed with pertinent information.
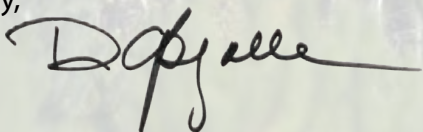
We're also spearheading a public information campaign to help people understand not only how we practice sustainable forestry, but that the forest and forest products are essential to their lives. Our "A tree for life, forests for a lifetime" campaign began in the Detroit area in winter 2017 and has had a measurable impact, helping people who may not have forests in their communities understand that trees are important to their lives.

Managing forests for today and into the future requires careful thought, partnerships and hard work. Forests and the influences on them are ever-changing. Research is an essential part in seeking solutions to many issues. For example, FRD is working hand-in-hand with the DNR's Wildlife Division and Michigan State University to look for solutions to regenerate hardwood species in forests impacted by browsing, insects and other factors. Research is also ongoing to grow trees that resist insects and disease or are resilient to environmental factors.
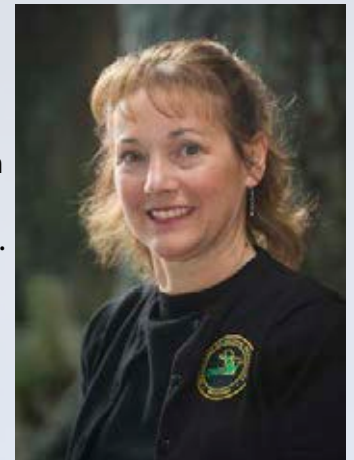
There are more highlights, accomplishments and challenges outlined in the next few pages along with our goals for the next five years.

Our mission has never changed in ever-changing times. Managing and protecting our state's great resources for today and for future generations is a commitment of FRD's 300 employees. Thank you to our staff, stakeholders and partners who helped put this plan together. I look forward to what we can accomplish together during the next five years!

Sincerely,

Deb Begalle, State Forester and Chief of Forest Resources Division

The Department of Natural Resources

Mission

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.

Goals

- Protect natural and cultural resources
- Ensure sustainable recreation use and enjoyment
- Enable strong natural resource-based economies
- Improve and build strong relationships and partnerhips, internally and externally
- Foster effective business practices and good governance

Forest Resources Division

Mission

To manage, protect and provide for the sustainable use of Michigan's forest resources

Vision

Vital, healthy and abundant forests that provide social, economic and ecological benefits

Definitions:

Goals: Represent broad, high-level themes that are consistent with the division's mission, vision and values

Objectives: Key accomplishments necessary to achieve goals

Performance measures: Actionable items that will gauge whether goals have been met

Michigan.gov/Forestry

Growth Rings: a reflection on the past five years

Forest Resources Division has grown with guidance from the strategic plan created five years ago. Each year can be traced back by the distinctive lines of annual changes which we call growth rings.

While many of the broad goals from the 2014 strategic plan remain, staying current requires that we recognize the changes taking place and adapt our strategies to meet those changes. Our intent was to build on the successes of the previous plan and proactively identify new growth areas that will carry us forward into the new decade. When we began to ask our staff and stakeholders what was new, it did not take long to assemble a lengthy list of significant developments.

The preceding five years saw strong growth in the forest and tourism economies. Michigan became The Trails State as our vast forest lands provided the backdrop for outdoor recreation opportunities. At the same time, the forest products industry generated record amounts of revenue, growing from $14.7 billion to $21.2 billion. Tangible proof of this growth is the recent opening of the largest single continuous particle board press in North America located in Grayling. Strong timber sale revenues are allowing us to invest in improvements to state forest roads and bridges, facilities and other infrastructure.

We took on perhaps one of the biggest partnerships in the division's recent history, the Good Neighbor Authority program, a project with the U.S. Forest Service to assist in the management of national forests. We expect to manage tens of thousands of acres of U.S. Forest Service lands for timber, wildlife and other values in the coming years. This will be accomplished by utilizing a mix of personnel, contracting, and program oversight to meet the needs of this new partnership.

Our resource protection program continues to play a vital role in the division. In addition to responding to wildfires and managing fire for ecosystem benefit, our qualified staff are now authorized to handle "all hazard" events such as floods, hurricanes, disease outbreaks and environmental hazards. Since the unveiling of the 2014 strategic plan, funding has been secured to replace a few pieces of aging fire equipment each year. With our fire program's expansive contribution to emergency management and response, continuing to modernize fire equipment and build emergency management capabilities has been identified as

a priority for the next five years.

Hemlock woolly adelgid was detected on state and private forest lands in 2015 and is an impending threat to our state forest system. Maintaining forest health and diversity remains a cornerstone of our mission. The forest health program is being strengthened to address threats caused by invasive species and diseases that can change the make up of the forest. This plan stresses partnerships and collaboration to help prevent and battle forest threats.

With the passage of Public Act 288 of 2016, we created a comprehensive road inventory and mapping system for state forest roads, which will facilitate forest planning, road maintenance and access for recreation. To date, over 13,000 miles of forest roads have been mapped statewide.

The forest cultivation program is seeing a significant boost in breadth and scope. While the actual planting of trees, mostly red and jack pine, remains a contracted activity, the preparation of sites and equipment operation has largely been incorporated into the work plans of our experienced, equipment-oriented staff. We also partnered with a private tree seedling company that moved a portion of its operations to Michigan at the state-managed Brighton Tree Improvement Center.

Technology continues to play an essential role in operations. Our Vegetative Management System has made significant progress over the past couple of years and is scheduled to be completed by spring 2021. The system will likely be the most customer-friendly and up-to-date business practice for bidding forest products in the nation. We will soon unveil our latest tree measuring methodology which will be more consistent and efficient and will lead to improved forest modeling and planning. Combine this with a nationally recognized Resource Assessment Section that provides cutting-edge GIS tools and it makes a truly remarkable support system for the management of Michigan's forest resources.

During the previous strategic planning effort, three Regional State Forest Management Plans were unveiled for the northern Lower Peninsula, eastern Upper Peninsula and western Upper Peninsula. During the next two years, these plans will be redesigned to guide management toward desired future conditions. This time around, we are pursuing a strategy that makes it easier to model multiple potential management strategies and predict an array of possible outcomes. We will set new goals to incorporate multiple values on state forest land.

In the face of change, it is reassuring to know that one thing remains constant: a highly trained, educated and adaptable staff dedicated to managing your state forests and their associated resources.

Michigan.gov/ForestsForALifetime

Forest Resources Division at a Glance
Michigan Forests

About 20 million acres of forest in Michigan

Michigan DNR manages 4 million* acres of state forest lands

There are 12 million* acres of private forest lands

There are 3 million* acres of federal land

The DNR plants 6 million seedlings annually

Dual certification under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative®

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE
SFI-00075

and the Forest Stewardship Council ®

FSC
www.fsc.org
FSC® C014912
The mark of responsible forestry

Economic Benefits

Forest products industry contributes $21.2 billion to Michigan's economy

Forest industry supports 99,000 jobs

400 loggers and truckers

270 mills

800 manufacturers

State forests provide 18% of raw material to forest products industry

Average 90 prescribed burns on 8,400 acres per year

150,000 burn permits issued annually

Average 250 wildfires on 2,200 acres annually

Four incident management teams

Forest Surveys

More than 20 million acres surveyed from the air for forest insects and disease

75,000 feet of vibratory plow lines to control oak wilt on state land

Work with 21 Cooperative Invasive Species Management Organizations

Seven land surveyors and four technicians locate and mark nearly 1,000 boundaries per year

GIS Award-winning team

allows the DNR to share spatial information on the state's forests, fish and wildlife with everyone.

Land Use

The DNR manages 6 million acres of mineral rights for oil and gas

Cooperative Forestry

1 million acres in forest stewardship plans

2.2 million acres in the commercial forest program

Urban Forestry

Awarded more than $280,000 in grants to 58 Michigan communities for tree planting and care in 2018

2019-2023 GOALS

1 Sustainably manage and protect forests for the people of Michigan

2 Promote and improve marketing and education

3

Empower, develop and recognize employees

4 Create a sustainable operations plan and foster efficient division processes

5 Build and improve resource partnerships

GOAL ONE
Sustainably manage and protect forests for the people of Michigan

Objectives
- **One:** Rewrite the Regional State Forest Management Plans to reflect current and future conditions in Michigan's state forests.
- **Two:** Integrate the role of fire in ecosystem management while protecting resources from detrimental wildfires.
- **Three:** Update the Forest Action Plan, division policies and other associated division guidance documents.
- **Four:** Research innovative tools and embrace reliable, usable technology to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of all program areas.
- **Five:** Develop a comprehensive maintenance, repair and replacement plan for roads, bridges and culverts.
- **Six:** Monitor forest health issues and climate resiliency to develop proactive ways to combat emerging and existing threats.

Performance Measures
- Complete and implement the Regional State Forest Management Plans that guide sustainable harvest, reforestation work, habitat values and recreation.
- Complete the Forest Action Plan by June 2020.
- Monitor implementation and effectiveness of state forest plans.
- Inventory 10% of the state forest annually.
- Record wildfire and prescribed burn statistics annually.
- Prioritize technology projects based on various factors (efficiencies, resources, customer service, return on investment, etc.).
- Enhance mobile workforce throughout the state and across all program levels.
- Conduct a statewide inventory and assessment of roads, bridges, culverts and access easements.
- Address operability and accessibility factors that prevent forest management activities.
- Use a forest health response team and conduct aerial surveys for emerging forest health issues.
- Administer lands in accordance with the Managed Public Lands Strategy.
- Identify tools to use in efforts to mitigate effects of climate change.

GOAL TWO
Promote and improve marketing and education

Objectives
- **One:** Refine and implement a communications and marketing plan to highlight the values of Michigan's state forests, and foster a sense of place and emphasize the importance of forest lands held in public trust.
- **Two:** Enhance and expand the statewide forest protection campaign through forest health education and fire prevention.
- **Three:** Continually enhance online content and presence.
- **Four:** Provide marketing and utilization expertise and information to promote a strong, diverse and growing forest products industry.

Performance Measures

- Maintain and expand the marketing program to new areas of the state to increase awareness and understanding of state forests.
- Record fire prevention interactions with the public and publish in a statewide annual fire report.
- Use technology and social media to engage the public and tell our story.
- Conduct surveys to assess the state of the forest products industry.
- Continue to produce and distribute the marketing and utilization newsletter.
- Create opportunities to provide training, data and expertise to promote resiliency and growth in existing and new forest utilization sectors.
- Deploy user-friendly programs and tools that inform educators about managing and protecting Michigan's forests, such as Project Learning Tree and Adopt-a-Forest.
- Publish and distribute an annual accomplishments report.
- Publish and distribute Forest Health Highlights annually.
- Publish annual reports on the economic impact of forests to the state's economy.
- Encourage management and learning opportunities of school forests through Forest Stewardship program grants.

GOAL THREE
Empower, develop and recognize employees

Objectives
- **One:** Create a division culture to foster mentorship from an employee's first day on the job to their last.
- **Two:** Restructure employee recognition program.
- **Three:** Ensure all employees have an annual work plan and understand how it contributes to division and department goals.
- **Four:** Expand the existing training program, which includes position-specific needs for job standards.
- **Five:** Create an environment that encourages a diverse workforce and supports individual growth and leadership development at all levels.
- **Six:** Maximize use and effectiveness of the employee appraisal system process.

Performance Measures

- Encourage staff to participate in mentoring relationships within the division and/or take part in the Quality of Life Mentoring Program.
- Expand division awards to be all-inclusive and transparent with timely recognition and appreciation of employees.
- Roll out a tentative annual work plan by program area during the first quarter of each fiscal year.
- Create skills books for positions and assign a mentor to assist new employees through the first year.
- Assess staff training needs and align opportunities with job-specific requirements and opportunities for employee growth.
- Support career development by attending professional meetings.
- Transition to the new performance management system and ensure that all employees understand their job-related tasks and expectations.

GOAL FOUR
Create a sustainable operations plan and foster efficient division processes

Objectives
- **One:** Identify priorities and align staff with resources.
- **Two:** Increase understanding among staff of the division's funding system and how it supports division operations and processes.
- **Three:** Incorporate a maintenance and replacement schedule for facilities and equipment.
- **Four:** Seek opportunities to work with other divisions and agencies in managing our resources.
- **Five:** Proactively pursue federal grant opportunities to support division priorities.
- **Six:** Explore and secure sustainable alternative funding sources for the Forest Resources Division.

Performance Measures
- Use annual work plans to align division priorities with the strategic plan and funding sources and annually report accomplishments.
- Generate timely, financial reports for information to aid and inform managers quarterly of budget dynamics.
- Update fire and land management equipment on a replacement schedule.
- Implement a maintenance and replacement plan for major building systems for each facility in coordination with the DNR asset management team.
- Identify a process each year to explore opportunities for increased efficiencies within the division.
- Coordinate and share resources with other agencies and divisions.
- Pursue involvement in out-of-state and all-hazard response to acquire necessary training and experience while providing mutual aid assistance.
- Create an organizational structure for the comprehensive management of the Good Neighbor Authority program across all three national forests.

GOAL FIVE
Build and improve resource partnerships

Objectives
- **One:** Enhance current cooperative partnerships in fire and all-hazard response.
- **Two:** Work cooperatively with other divisions, governments, tribal governments, universities and non-government agencies for mutual resource benefit.
- **Three:** Partner with public and private natural resource professionals to assist landowners in sustainably managing their land.
- **Four:** Partner with universities to address research needs of the division and to increase urban forestry capacity.
- **Five:** Collaborate with the Timber Advisory Council and the Forest Management Advisory Commity as well as other stakeholders to help meet division goals and priorities.
- **Six:** Work with Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas to help mitigate forest health threats.

Performance Measures

- Assist other agencies in all-hazard emergency response.
- Diversify incident management teams to include other divisions and agencies.
- Expand and implement Good Neighbor Authority agreements.
- Enhance and continue to build relationships with customers, stakeholders, tribal governments and advisory groups, such as the Urban and Community Forestry Council and the Forest Stewardship Advisory Council.
- Engage private landowners through support of forestry-related cooperative programs.
- Assist municipalities with urban forest management programs.
- Request proposals each year for research projects that align with division priorities as needed.
- Showcase the forest products industry in cooperation with the Timber Advisory Council and Forest Management Advisory Committee.
- Use Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas to combat current invasive species and future forest health threats.
- Annually attend forest industry organizational meetings.

Acknowledgements

Michigan's 4 million acres of state forest land represent a great public resource that will yield countless benefits for future generations. Forest Resources Division is deeply grateful to DNR staff, the public, conservation and advisory groups, customers, and partners who help in the sustainable management of your state forests.

Learn more about
Forest Resources Division at
Michigan.gov/Forestry