



Michigan Forest Stewardship Program Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report



The **Vision** of the Michigan Forest Stewardship Program is that forest landowners and their families have access to information, markets, people and programs to help them manage, protect and enjoy their woods now and for future generations.

The **Mission** of the Michigan Forest Stewardship Program is to partner with USDA Forest Service, other government agencies and private organizations to provide 250 foresters and 1,000 loggers with resources to help them serve 400,000 family forest owners as they manage, protect and enjoy 9 million acres of private forest land.

The **Values** of the Michigan Forest Stewardship Program are public-private partnerships, customer service, transparency, cost-effectiveness, innovation and continual improvement.

Fiscal Year 2023 Accomplishments

Partnership Grants. The Forest Stewardship Program invested \$57,876 in key partners who serve family forest landowners statewide. Michigan Tree Farm Committee received \$16,000 to promote Tree Farm to landowners, support committee administration and for annual audits of Michigan's two independently managed groups (Green Timber Consulting Foresters and Grossman Forestry). Michigan Forest Association received \$2,150 to pay for first-year membership of 43 landowners who developed a forest stewardship plan. Association of Consulting Foresters received \$15,000 to sponsor the regional Practice of Consulting Foresters class in Toledo, Ohio in



February that was attended by 97 foresters from 18 states. Huron River Watershed Council spent \$13,282 to pilot Forest to Mi Faucet. Sustainable Resources Institute spent \$11,444 to administer the Michigan Master Logger program for the Michigan Association of Timbermen.

Left: Brock VanOss and Carly Graff host a Tree Farm field day at Forest Park Schools in Crystal Falls.

Investing in Loggers and Foresters. The National Woodland Owner Survey reports only 5% of Michigan's woodland owners have a forest management plan and only 29% use a forester for a timber sale. Therefore, Michigan Forest Stewardship Program invests in both loggers and foresters. MI FSP provided eight Sustainable Forestry Initiative trainings for 843 loggers on the Fiber Sourcing Standard to protect water quality and increase landowner education.

Forest Stewardship Plans. Michigan developed 148 forest stewardship plans covering 29,786 acres in FY2023. This included 144 plans for landowners, three for school forests and one landscape plan for the Crystal Lake Watershed in Benzie County. Michigan relies on 155 private sector foresters to develop plans for landowners. About 83% of landowners in FY2023 used their plans to enroll in the [Qualified Forest Program](#) (63%) or [Commercial Forest Program](#) (20%) for lower property taxes. FSP provided \$18,933 in federal funds for a 10% cost-share for the 144 landowner plans (\$131 per plan) which was matched by \$217,875 in landowner out-of-pocket costs (\$1,513 per plan). The program did not provide cost share for 35 plans in FY2023 that were updates of prior plans. The number of forest stewardship plans in FY2023 remains well below the 10-year average of 252 plans because of the low 10% cost share. There are now 7,418 landowners and 1,262,829 acres with forest stewardship plans in Michigan, which is 14% of our nine million acres of family forests. About 70% of acres with a forest stewardship plan are in the First Congressional District which covers the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula. Management plans provide a fast return on investment with lower property taxes or income from a timber sale or financial assistance programs.

Wheels to Woods. This program provides transportation grants to schools for educational field trips to a nearby forest or forest products company. The pandemic greatly reduced field trips for a few years but 2023 was a great year for students to visit a forest. Wheels to Woods funded 89 trips in FY2023 for 9,260 students, 512 teachers and 963 parents at a cost of \$46,259, or \$4.99 per student. Over the past eight years Wheels to Woods has funded 550 trips for 60,586 students, teachers, outdoor educators and parents. The program is funded by grants from USDA Forest Service through the Michigan Tree Farm Committee. Huron Pines AmeriCorps member Meagan Hoffman administered the program in 2023. Applications and more information are at WheelsToWoods.org.



Tree Planting for Water Quality. USDA Forest Service provides Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding to plant trees to protect water quality. Michigan FSP has \$454,000 from the Forest Service and \$85,800 from the Arbor Day Foundation to plant 150,000 trees at 20 school forests across Michigan. A dozen consulting foresters helped six of the twenty schools plant 26,506 trees in their school forests in FY2023.

Left: teachers Kristen Hovest and Nicole Shaughnessy plant trees at the Knabusch Math and Science Center in Monroe.

Little Bridges of Michigan Counties. Michigan FSP completed its “Little Bridges of Michigan Counties” grant from the Forest Service in FY2023 to help loggers use crane mats to protect wetlands and small streams. Partners include Michigan Association of Timbermen, Michigan Tree Farm Committee and Michigan Sustainable Forestry Initiative. Timbermen spent \$93,500 to give away 198 crane mats to loggers in FY2023 (379 total mats over 4 years). SFI invested \$10,000 for online logger education. Tree Farm provided 34 site visits to landowners for \$3,800. The DNR hosted log scaling workshops for loggers FY2023 with Sustainable Resources Institute.



Forest to Mi Faucet. Forest to Mi Faucet is a campaign to help foresters, loggers, landowners and the public understand how forests contribute to clean drinking water. The project includes twenty conservation organizations statewide with an emphasis on the southern Lower Peninsula. Project partners will assist municipal water utilities implement their source water protection plans, plant 80,000 trees and educate landowners and the public about connections between forests and drinking water. The \$1,057,300 funding is provided by the USDA Forest Service. More information about the partners and project is at Michigan.gov/ForestToMiFaucet.



Which Great Lake would you drink from?

City	Municipal Water Source	Forest Cover in Watershed	Quality of Great Lake
Marquette	Lake Superior	91%	Good
Detroit	Lake Huron	67%	Good
Grand Rapids	Lake Michigan	49%	Fair
Monroe	Lake Erie	19%	Poor

Data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

White Oak Initiative. The White Oak Initiative is a national project to raise awareness that white oak is not regenerating adequately to sustain desired levels in the future. Oak requires larger gaps in the forest canopy for more sunlight, more prescribed fire to control competing vegetation and fewer deer per acre that are eating most seedlings. A Michigan White Oak Coalition worked to educate family forest landowners and foresters about these issues with webinars, field days and demonstration sites. Funding came from a USDA Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration grant through the American Forest Foundation.

2023 Stewardship Forester. Brock VanOss of VanOss Forestry Services in Crystal Falls won the 2023 Stewardship Forester award at the meeting of the Association of Consulting Foresters in February. His clients use their forest stewardship plans to achieve their goals and do fun projects in the woods like planting trees or harvesting timber to improve wildlife habitat.

Something that sets VanOss apart from his peers is his work training loggers on chainsaw safety and providing audits for the Master Logger Certification programs in Michigan and Wisconsin. VanOss is recruiting Master Loggers in the southern Lower Peninsula with funding from a Forest to Mi Faucet grant. He also helps several schools manage and plant trees in their school forest with GLRI funding.



Brock VanOss accepts the 2023 Stewardship Forester of the Year award.

Fiscal Year 2023 Finances

Michigan Forest Stewardship Program invested \$811,085 in family forest landowners in FY2023 and had direct impacts of \$1,232,017 when including \$420,932 in private matching funds. Indirect financial and ecological impacts of the program are not measured or easy to quantify.

Table 1. Michigan Forest Stewardship Program Spending in Fiscal Year 2023.

Funded Projects	Administration	Grants to Partners	Source	Percent	Private Match
Forest Stewardship	\$172,831	-	USFS	21%	-
Indirect (16.58% of labor)	\$26,147	-	USFS	3%	-
Service foresters	\$32,073	-	DNR	4%	-
Grants to plan writers	-	\$33,418	USFS	4%	\$227,282
Partnership grants	-	\$57,876	USFS	7%	\$1,800
Little Bridges - crane mats	\$4,306	\$112,400	USFS	14%	\$37,850
Trees for School Forests	-	\$38,151	USFS	5%	\$90,404
Funds for tree seedlings	-	\$18,714	ADF	2%	-
More Trees for School Forests	-	\$80,060	USFS	10%	-
Funds for tree seedlings	-	\$9,849	ADF	1%	-
Forest to Mi Faucet	\$4,813	\$154,033	USFS	20%	\$6,396
White Oak Initiative	-	\$55,542	USFS	7%	\$57,200
Huron Pines AmeriCorps	\$11,000	\$0	DNR	1%	
Subtotal	\$251,170	\$560,043	-	-	\$420,932
Totals	\$811,213		\$1,232,145		



About 91% of funds in FY2023 for Michigan Forest Stewardship Program came from USDA Forest Service (State, Private and Tribal Forestry). The DNR spent \$251,042 or 31% internally on administrative expenses. The DNR awarded \$560,043 or 69% of funds in external grants to private sector partners to deliver Forest Stewardship Program activities. The Forest Service requires match on most federal funds and almost all matching funds come from the private sector rather than the State of Michigan. However, Table 1 underreports DNR labor costs for three service foresters, three accountants, a spatial analyst and five managers for plan payments and spatial reporting. Arbor Day Foundation is providing match to federal GLRI funds for tree planting. American Forest Foundation provided a subaward of USDA Forest Service funds for the White Oak Initiative.

Priorities and Strategies

The Michigan Forest Stewardship Program has five priorities to guide investment of state and federal resources.

- 1) **Empowered Landowners.** Awareness, engagement and learning lead to landowner success in their woods.
- 2) **Accessible Markets.** Sell products and improve forests for profit, not at a cost to landowners or society.
- 3) **Clean Water.** Forests produce ecosystem services that should be valued by society and in the market.
- 4) **Certified Forests.** Define land ethics and provide confidence to consumers that forests are managed well.
- 5) **School Forests.** Students, teachers and parents discover the amazing wonders of urban and rural forests.

The Michigan Forest Stewardship Program uses three strategies to implement its priorities.

- 1) **Public-Private Partnerships.** Invest in private-sector organizations that assist family forest owners.
- 2) **Build Capacity.** Help foresters and loggers grow their businesses to better serve more landowners.
- 3) **Plans as Connections.** Simple plans connect landowners to a forester, their peers and useful programs.

Questions? Contact Mike Smalligan at 517-449-5666 or SmalliganM@Michigan.gov.

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