

**Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
1994 Public Act 451, Section 52506 Report  
Fiscal Year 2024-25**

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

**(a) The number of harvestable acres in the state forest, as determined from information in the state forest management plan under section 52503.**

A new draft *State Forest Management Plan* (SFMP) now addresses the planning requirements of Part 525 and forest certification systems. The current draft plan specifies a planned harvest of 502,944 acres over the decade of 2027-2036, but this number is presently being revised to account for the adverse impact of the northern Michigan ice storm in March 2025.

**(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 36,164 acres of state forest harvested in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, producing an estimated volume of 797,323 cords.

**(c) The number of acres of state-owned lands owned or controlled by the Department, other than state forest 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 775 acres harvested in FY 2025, producing an estimated volume of 30,451 cords.

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

During FY 2025, the various trails programs in Michigan were promoted at local, regional, state, national, and international levels. Outdoor events and trails programs saw trail use numbers similar to previous years. While most events have returned to in-person, the Department has continued virtual access to provide more accessible options to participants, both within the state of Michigan and beyond. Overall, trail license numbers increased 18.1%, largely due to a rebound from low snowmobile sales in the winter of 2024. Sales of ORV licenses increased by 1.2%, ORV trail permits decreased by 1.0%, snowmobile registrations increased by 33.8%, and snowmobile trail permits increased by 84.3%. The differences in sales and registrations resulted in trail use numbers marginally above the 5-year historical average.

The Department continues to promote the Recreation Passport program and other trails-related information through the DNR website, statewide marketing campaigns, and social media. The Ride Right promotion and safety messaging has been a successful way to communicate to motorized trail users.

The Department continues to enhance its website with additional mapping, and ways to

easily access information on DNR parks, trails, campgrounds and facilities. The Department also maintains and updates annually an inventory and map of all state forest roads open to ORV use in accordance with Public Act 288 of 2016. In addition, the Department has completed the update and improvements to its Recreation Search web application, which provides a search tool and information for all recreation activities on state land. Information on trails and campsites on state forest land continues to undergo comprehensive review, and staff are making recommendations to better the state forest camping experience both online and in the campgrounds.

Staff continue to implement the 2022-2032 DNR Trails Plan. This plan examines the state-designated system comprehensively, which includes four seasons of motorized and nonmotorized trail opportunities on both land and water. The four main goals cover (1) sustainable maintenance and development; (2) funding; (3) planning and collaboration; and (4) marketing, promotion, and education to lead to outcomes of quality trail experiences and resource management; public stewardship; and community and economic prosperity.

In 2025, staff completed several major trail projects, including the resurfacing of roughly 15 miles of the Musketawa Trail, completion of the Higgins Lake Bike Route, and the replacement of several bridges and culverts along state trails. Staff also began the design and construction of many projects, including the Island Lake Loop, the Clinton-Ionia-Shiawassee Trail, the Polly Ann Trail, and the Manistee River Bridge on the Betsie Valley Trail. DNR staff also spent a considerable amount of time and effort on clearing over 3,200 miles of trail impacted by the northern Michigan ice storm. Lastly, DNR staff continued the planning of upcoming trail repairs, maintenance, and capital improvements throughout the state, per the DNR Trails Plan. Overall, the implementation of the plan is well on its way and continues to be a guiding resource for DNR staff.

The Department continues to partner with state agencies and other units of government and non-profit organizations to promote and develop trails. The collaborators include the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, the Top of Michigan Trails Council, Traverse Area Recreation & Transportation Trails, the National Park Service, the 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 Trails Advisory Council (MTAC), a group established to advise the Governor and the Department on the creation, development, operation, and maintenance of motorized and non-motorized trails along with its subcommittees, continues to discuss and make recommendations on trail-related issues. MTAC and several sub-advisory groups meet quarterly to advise the Department on trails.

With the help of many partners, the Department's Wildlife Division (WLD) continues to manage Grouse Enhanced Management Systems (GEMS), which provide walk-in access to ruffed grouse hunting areas across the northern Lower and Upper Peninsulas. The goals of this work are to provide unique hunting opportunities, promote hunter recruitment and retention, expand local economies, provide a destination for the traveling wing-shooter, and accelerate timber harvest opportunities. The Department manages 19 GEMS, 6 in the northern Lower Peninsula and 13 in the Upper Peninsula. The Department continues to maintain the Mi-HUNT web application, which shows the four million acres of state forest land open to public hunting, along

with habitat information useful for planning a hunting trip or other recreational activities. Wildlife Division also actively manages many dams located on State owned land (State forest land and State game areas), which provide wide-ranging wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. WLD conducts annual dam inspections and maintenance activities for all division-managed dams to ensure these facilities are safe to operate and continue to provide critical wildlife habitat and wildlife recreation opportunities.

The DNR Fisheries Division (FI) actively manages many lakes and streams located within the state forest system, providing wide-ranging recreational fishing opportunities. FI is responsible for stocking fish in many waters within state forests that enhance these opportunities. Fish habitat improvement projects are conducted within the state forests to optimize natural fish populations. This includes projects completed by non-governmental organization (NGO) partners that are fully or partially funded through the Fisheries Habitat Grant program. Many dams overseen by FI are in the state forests. Recent emphasis in management of streams has focused on restoring a greater degree of connectivity. This has resulted in a shift in focus to dam removal when doing so is prudent and feasible. FI conducts annual dam inspections and maintenance activities for all division-managed dams to ensure these facilities are safe to operate and continue to provide recreational opportunities. Much of the campground use within the state forests is associated with, or generated by, water-related activities including fishing. FI also implements regulations on waters within the state forest system that are intended to optimize the fishing-related opportunities within the forests in a sustainable way.

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

A total of 311,618 ORV licenses and 259,521 trail permits were sold in FY 2025, a 1.2% increase in ORV licenses and a 1.0% decrease in trail permits compared to FY 2024.

There were 61,964 snowmobile registrations and 139,887 snowmobile trail permits sold in FY 2025, an increase of 33.8% in registrations and an increase of 84.3% in trail permits from FY 2024.

Over \$2,067,300 in state forest camping revenue was collected during FY 2025, a decrease of 2.60% from FY 2024. Recreation Passports sales increased in FY 2025, which by formula increased revenue in the Forest Recreation Account from \$1,821,500 in FY 2024 to \$1,979,800 in FY 2025.

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

The new SFMP will provide direction to multi-divisional field staff for timber and wildlife habitat management of state forest lands. WLD works jointly with FRD to develop management prescriptions through the compartment review process to ensure wildlife habitat management goals in the SFMP are reflected in approved stand level treatments. In FY 2025, WLD participated in reviewing about 400,000 acres of state forest to determine wildlife management needs. Beyond vegetative management reviews, this acreage was considered for habitat improvement and habitat planning on sites with specific plant and animal concerns. This is accomplished via identified featured wildlife species that are used to help direct management and to ensure clarity in evaluations of management.

In addition, WLD conducted intensive wildlife habitat management in the northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula in 2025. This included managing over 4,300 acres to create or maintain forest openings/ grasslands. Over 1,406 mast-bearing shrubs and/or trees were planted on state land for wildlife food. Additionally, in the southern Lower Peninsula, 1,250 acres of forest management were conducted on State Game Area land, and over 338 trees and shrubs were planted for wildlife food. Trees and shrubs planted included red and white oak saplings, sand cherry, American plum, pecan, hazelnut, serviceberry, apple, pear, elderberry, and red osier dogwood.

**(g) The status of the plan and whether the Department recommends any changes in the plan.**

The 2008 State Forest Management Plan (SFMP) and the 2013 Regional SFMPs are being replaced by a new SFMP. The new SFMP utilizes industry-standard modeling software and up-to-date forest inventory data to provide timber goals and projection of wildlife habitat for the next decade.

Completion of the new plan had been expected in June 2025. However, the northern Michigan ice storm in March 2025 caused significant damage to state forest resources which necessitated remodeling and revision of timber goals and wildlife habitat projections within the area impacted by the storm. A second public review and Director approval are now expected to be completed in about September of 2026. Implementation of the new plan will begin in FY 2027 for timber sale preparation over the decade of 2029-2038.

**(h) The status of certification efforts required in section 52505 and 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 audit was conducted by SCS Global Services on October 6-10, 2025, which resulted in a recommendation for continued certification of the state forest under both certification systems.