

# Michigan's Forest Action Plan Five-Year Highlights Report

2020 – 2025



Contents

Introduction .....3

    Purpose .....3

    Report framework and organization .....3

Engagement Opportunities .....7

Highlights of our partners’ accomplishments .....8

    National Priority 1: Conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses Increasing Forest Management on Private Lands .....8

    National Priority 2: Protect forests from threats..... 13

    National Priority 3: Enhance public benefits from trees and forests. .... 16

Sharing our partners’ challenges ..... 19

Our partners’ priorities ..... 21

Our partners’ data, GIS, and outreach needs..... 22

Forest Action Plan - Michigan DNR Highlights..... 24

    Goal 1: Enhance coordination among programs, stakeholders and partners. .... 24

    Goal 2: Advocating for sound forestry practices ..... 28

    Goal 3: Increase economic productivity and benefits ..... 32

    Goal 4: Communicate the value and importance of forestry..... 33

    Goal 5: Involve partners and the public in managing Michigan’s forests ..... 39

    Goal 6: Monitor the condition of the forest and impacts of our work ..... 47

    Goal 7: Improve understanding of forests through research ..... 48

    Goal 8: Implement actions to improve Michigan’s forests ..... 49

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) ..... 49

    Total IIJA funding to support Michigan SFAP Implementation:..... 49

    DNR-led Projects ..... 49

    Partner-led Projects ..... 51

Conclusion..... 52

## Introduction

The Michigan Statewide Forest Action Plan, developed in 2020, serves as a guiding document for forest management in the state. Michigan's plan covers more than 20 million acres of forest land and involves many partners cooperating to meet goals for the forests that shelter abundant wildlife, provide recreation opportunities, give Michigan its character and propel a forest products industry valued at more than \$27 billion annually. Here's a look at how partners are working with the Department of Natural Resources, federal resources and each other to meet a wide range of objectives that fall under national priorities. This teamwork is vital to keep Michigan's forests thriving and productive.

## Purpose

The Michigan Department of Natural resources (DNR) and United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USDA Forest Service) meet quarterly to discuss, among other topics, the implementation of the State Forest Action Plan (SFAP). The DNR also meets annually with stakeholders and partners to provide updates and seek input on accomplishments, challenges, data needs, and any new issues that may have developed over the last five years. All the discussions and information gathered is synthesized at the halfway mark of the planning period (five years) into this report to show the implementation status of the Forest Action Plan. It can also be used to determine if any amendments are needed which can be made at any time throughout the planning period. This report is part of the content discussed with the USFS at the Five-year Review Meeting on Feb. 23, 2026, and is required by the 2008 Farm Bill federal legislation.

## Report framework and organization

The core elements that form the content of the five-year highlights report are:

1. Accomplishments
2. Challenges
3. Priorities for the next five years
4. Data needs
5. New issues

First, we'll focus on the examples our external partners shared with us at a series of engagement opportunities. That is followed by a section that highlights all five elements derived from input received from the five cooperative program leads and other Forest Resource Division (FRD) staff. The five cooperative programs are:

1. Community Wildfire Protection Program (CWPP)
2. Forest Health Program (FHP)
3. Forest Legacy Program (FLP)
4. Forest Stewardship Program (FSP)
5. Urban and Community Forestry Program (UCF)

Each of the partner accomplishments is tied to one of the three national priorities:

1. Conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses
2. Protect forests from threats
3. Enhance public benefits from trees and forests

To focus on these three national priorities, Michigan's Forest Action Plan planning framework breaks it down further into eight goals, which each contain a portion of the 21 strategies; these in turn each contain a portion of the 155 objectives. Every objective has metrics identified that help indicate progress toward achieving the objectives as actions are taken throughout the 10-year planning period. This entire framework is meant to organize effort and enable tracking and reporting at various levels within the hierarchy.

Input received from our cooperative program and other division staff is organized first by goals, then strategies. The objective level (containing 155 objectives) was thought to be too specific for a meaningful five-year highlights report. Each strategy will contain the five elements of the highlights report mentioned above; input is grouped by the respective cooperative program or division staff who provided that input. An overview of the eight goals and corresponding strategies is below:

### **1. Enhance coordination among programs, stakeholders and partners**

- 1.1. Improve oversight and delivery of the five cooperative programs to help ensure the provision of ecosystem services that are so important to Michigan's people.
- 1.2. Forest Resources and the Marketing and Outreach divisions collaborate with stakeholders and the Eastern Region State and Private Forestry technology transfer process to develop and deliver comprehensive communication and engagement activities.
- 1.3. Develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to deal with cooperative program challenges that includes stakeholders.
- 1.4. Ensure that any government or department climate action plan includes communication and engagement activities and allows for collaboration with partner organizations.

## **2. Advocating for sound forestry practices**

- 2.1. Address social and political barriers to improve planning and management of Michigan's forest resources.
- 2.2. Using the best available science, all partners should collaborate to implement a landscape approach to tree and forest management that can address all aspects of sustainable forest management in forested landscapes and urban settings.
- 2.3. All partners engaged in the management of trees, forests and forest values should engage in continuing education for staff.

## **3. Increase economic productivity and benefits**

- 3.1. Communicate and engage with landowners and professional foresters to ensure awareness of ecosystem services values, availability of forest management information and how to collaborate in forest management.

## **4. Communicate the value and importance of forestry**

- 4.1. Communicate directly with the public, wildland urban interface landowners, youth and state politicians about the principles of forest management; how certification systems work to ensure sound management; and how managing to provide forest values leads to multiple benefits from the forest for the people of Michigan.
- 4.2. Increase awareness among Michigan's forest owners, partners and residents about forests, partnership opportunities and the benefits of collaboration that benefit all residents of Michigan.
- 4.3. Effectively communicate priorities, requirements, relevance and focus of cooperative programs to the people of Michigan.

## **5. Involve partners and the public in managing Michigan's forests**

- 5.1. Collaborate with a diverse group of partners including state agencies, land trusts and other conservation organizations to protect working forests.
- 5.2. Engage with forest landowners to encourage the protection and sound management of privately-owned forests through collaborative programs.
- 5.3. Assess outreach and engagement needs to ensure an appropriate distribution of resources across the state.
- 5.4. Develop partnerships to address the threats and impacts to forests from major stressors such as climate change, invasive pests and native insects and diseases.

- 5.5. In cooperation with urban tree and forest managers, actively work to establish standards, policies, green infrastructure plans and best management practices; improve awareness and engagement in actively managing urban trees and forests to benefit the people of the community.
- 5.6. Engage with volunteers and professionals to provide training for participation in community-science opportunities and use of public data sets.
- 5.7. Engage with the private sector to provide professional development opportunities, tools and training relevant to management for healthy trees and forests and their associated benefits.

## **6. Monitor the condition of the forest and impacts of our work**

- 6.1. Address the needs for inventory and monitoring and provide for the establishment of baseline urban tree and forest data, forest health data, recreational use, risk assessment, future projections and measurement of conservation outcomes through collaboration with partners and community-science projects for the five federal cooperative programs.

## **7. Improve understanding of forests through research**

- 7.1. Expand the scope of and support for federal and university-based research and associated extension.

## **8. Implement actions to improve Michigan's forests**

- 8.1. Work with stakeholders and private landowners to improve forest planning and implementation of management practices across the state.

## Engagement opportunities

Engaging with stakeholders was a high priority in Michigan's SFAP both on an annual basis (objective 1.1.1) and for the five-year review (objective 1.1.2). Annual spring stakeholder meetings were held from 2020 to 2024 in either virtual, hybrid, or in-person formats. These annual meetings served to provide updates from the cooperative programs, spotlight presentations from partners, and hold time to network and discuss future collaborations. Each annual meeting included an evaluation component to request feedback on format and content. Invited stakeholders include those organizations involved in the 2020 planning process plus new additions as suggested by cooperative program staff and partners.

In 2025, the planning team undertook a more thorough engagement process to seek input from partners regarding plan progress. Due to unforeseen circumstances, this engagement process evolved throughout the year. Less than a week before the scheduled spring stakeholder meeting, northern Michigan experienced a severe ice storm that caused widespread damage, power outages and a state-of-emergency declaration. After careful consideration of the impact of the storm and needed response efforts, the team decided to do a phased approach for the remainder of 2025.

In June 2025, DNR hosted a webinar that provided a summary of the five-year review requirements and opportunities for input. The planning team decided to focus stakeholder input at the national priority level rather than the increased complexity at the strategy level (qty 21) or objective (qty 155). From June to September 2025, DNR collected partner accomplishments via an online survey and one-on-one interviews. Seven partner interviews were conducted via Teams with follow-up requests for pictures via email for inclusion in this highlights report. Through November and December 2025, a series of four stakeholder virtual meetings were held. Each of these small group meetings were limited to a max of 10 attendees to encourage meaningful conversations among stakeholders. In total, 21 stakeholders plus DNR staff attended. These meetings were facilitated to collect input to identify:

- Implementation challenges over the past five years
- Implementation priorities to focus on for the next five years
- Data needs or new issues.

Notes from each of these meetings were summarized and condensed for incorporation into this report.

## Highlights of our partners' accomplishments

### National Priority 1: Conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple values and uses

#### Increasing Forest Management on Private Lands

Prescribed burns, improving timber stands, tree planting and land management projects are just some of the ways the Michigan Forest Association is focusing on the importance of private forest landowners.

Through the help of \$6.4 million gained through the Inflation Reduction Act, the Forest and Water Fund Cost Share Program is helping more than 250 private forest landowners maintain carbon reserves and return ecosystems to healthy status.

The cost-share program will help these landowners manage their woods to meet both short and long-term goals. It specifically targets landowners in the Lower Peninsula, giving 100% reimbursement to those with limited resources, veteran status, people whose income is below the federal poverty level, tribal landowners and landowners who have owned their properties for less than 10 years.

“The big story is that it’s money for private forest landowners. That doesn’t happen often and it’s \$6.4 million, that’s huge,” says Nicole Frost, Michigan Forest Association’s executive director.

These cost-share efforts will continue through Dec. 13, 2029, along with the organization’s other goals geared toward educating and aiding private landowners. For example, Frost has been working with Kevin Sayers and Daphna Gadoth from the DNR’s Urban and Community Forestry Program to republish a directory of Michigan’s Famous and Historic Trees for the 250-year anniversary, continuing the annual Forest Celebration with the Michigan Tree Farm Committee and pushing out more copies of the Michigan Forest Magazine, a publication mailed to members and partners.

“It’s filled with all sorts of articles from the foresters, peer-to-peer landowners, from doctors and scientists. It’s got fun, quirky stories, goofy pictures, consulting forester ads, it’s got a little nostalgia. It’s the number one thing our members appreciate and enjoy and don’t want to lose,” Frost shares.

The Michigan Forest Association’s mission is to inspire and empower people to sustainably manage, conserve and enjoy forests through education, advocacy and fellowship. Frost explains it like this: “My passion for this stems from my sixth-grade leaf collection. I

remember my grandpa taking me out in the woods and I was just amazed at the superior knowledge he had. How did he know all these trees? I wanted that kind of knowledge and that's what led me to go to school to be a forester.”



*Figure 1. Jerry and Kathie Jaloszynski on the Canopy Walk at Dow Gardens during the 2025 MFA Annual Celebration in Midland, Michigan*

## Protection and appreciation of old forests

Protecting old growth and diverse forests for the public to appreciate are the main goals for the Old Growth Forest Network.

Old growth describes natural forests composed of primarily native species, including stands with trees that are relatively old and large for the geographic location, site conditions and species. These forests have incredible biological, recreational and spiritual values and provide economic and environmental benefits.

Since 2021, the Old Growth Forest Network has inducted 22 forests into the network to help preserve them for public benefit. The most recent forests inducted include two public forests, Kehl Lake Natural Area in Leelanau County and Independence Oaks County Park in Oakland County. These forests were selected through a nomination process with assistance from local county-level volunteers who help assess local forests for old-growth characteristics.

“Our main goal is to help get people out to these places to appreciate their many different values, which is why we are working to establish a Network forest in every county of the forested U.S. and raise awareness about old-growth values and continue the conversation about how to steward, protect and recruit more old-growth forests,” says Nick Sanchez, network manager for the Old Growth Forest Network.

This program has worked with many other groups including the USDA Forest Service, the State of Michigan, local governments, land trusts and private forest landowners to help elevate the importance of the economic, recreational and spiritual values these forests provide.

Anyone can [nominate](#) a forest or [volunteer](#) to help vet their local forests to find the best fit for the Network.



*Figure 2. Kehl Lake Natural Area in Leelanau County.*

## Michigan Association of Timbermen helps loggers meet sustainability standards

The Michigan Association of Timbermen has been leveling up its processes and promoting the timber industry.

The group reports log truckers and timbermen participating in hurricane relief across the country, ice storm relief in northern Michigan, building and opening new mills and educating the public.

One of its programs is the Michigan Master Logger Program. It certifies logging companies that demonstrate responsible harvesting and sustainable forest management, meeting the rigorous standards of the American Loggers Council. Around 70 Michigan companies are currently certified, with more joining each year. The program is overseen by the Master Logger Committee — loggers supporting loggers — which ensures compliance and guide program development.



*Figure 3. Loggers work a timber sale in Delta County.*

The Michigan Association of Timbermen also provides forestry industry education to the public, including organizing outreach efforts and exhibits at career fairs and in schools, hosting field trips for students, publicly promoting the industry on social media and through traditional press. This includes the Timber Talk Magazine and email newsletters,

press releases to show the industry at work in Michigan, job creation, or other positive stories.

“Education is critical because it builds understanding of sustainable forestry practices, enhances the credibility of the industry, and helps ensure that forest management and timber harvesting meet high standards for environmental stewardship and public,” says Justin Knepper, Executive Director of the Michigan Association of Timbermen.

## National Priority 2: Protect forests from threats.

### Mitigating wildfire risk in the Marquette County Forest

Marquette County’s Community Wildfire Protection Plan provides an outline for working toward a future with less wildfire risk and more outdoor recreation opportunities.

Through the help of Michigan State University Extension, the Great Lakes Climate Corps and DNR funding, Marquette County is working to aid 6,000 people living in the county’s highest risk wildfire areas.

This project will revitalize fire breaks in a Marquette County Forest in the K.I. Sawyer/Gwinn area covering 9,500 acres. Work will include completing overdue maintenance and creating more trail fire breaks.

“Something that’s really come out of our process and talking to private landowners is the lack of a place to get resources such as education and Firewise training,” says Nico Vermaat, Marquette County Climate Adaptation Coordinator.

Project organizers hope to bring FireWise, a national fire safety and training program, back to Michigan to help educate homeowners and landowners in the area. An initial goal is to get fire departments in the county together to create a place where people can go to learn more about protecting their properties and assessing risk. This project is just the first step to educate and protect the people and land in Marquette.

“I’m from Marquette, so getting to do work that’s impactful in my own community has been something that has been interesting,” Vermaat said. “Learning about all these different parts of Marquette County and the history and how wildfires have impacted people across the country makes you really want to do your part for the future and protect the land that people love.”

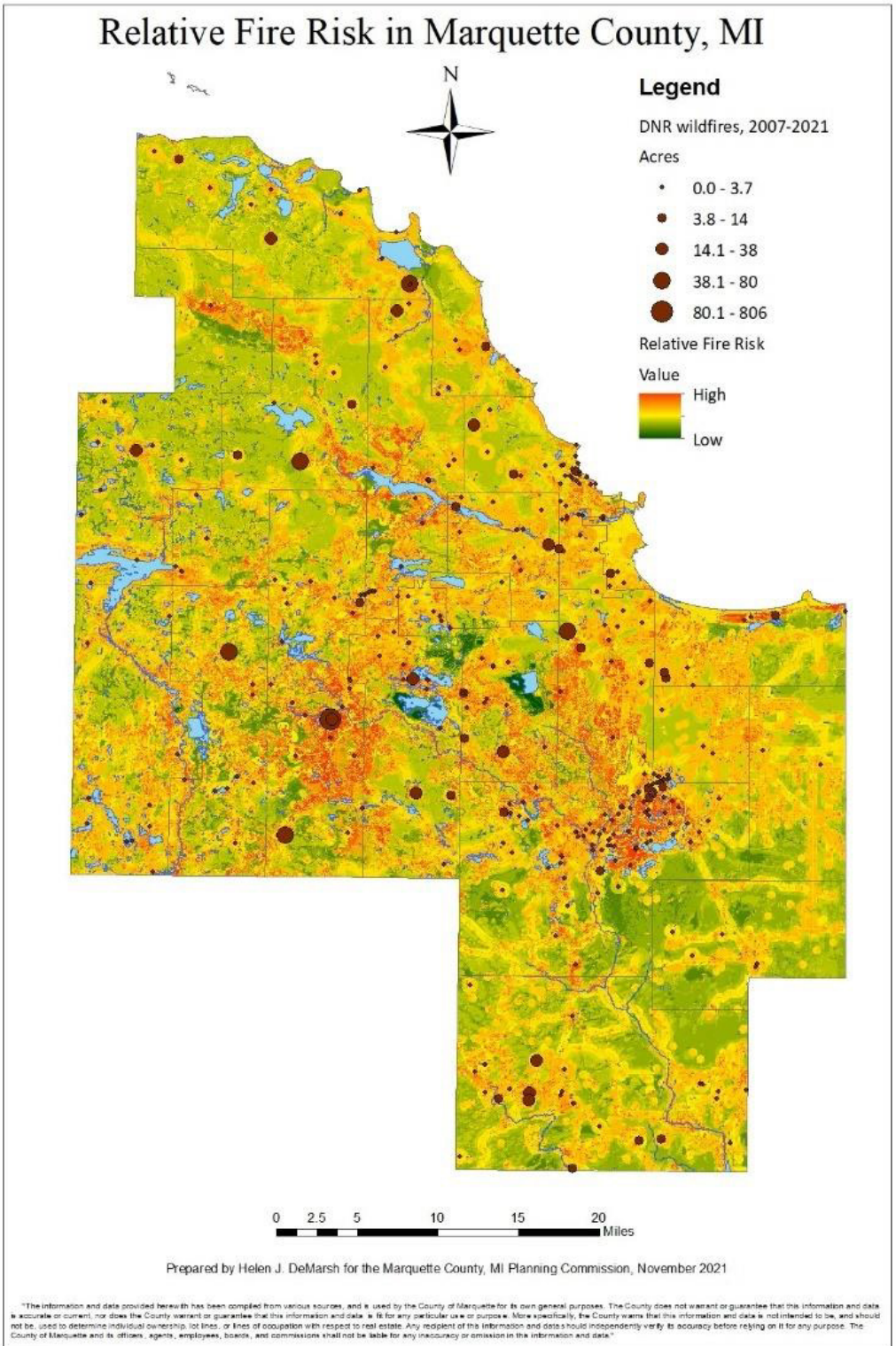


Figure 4. Marquette County’s Community Wildfire Protection Plan fire risk map, sourced from [www.mqtcoplan.org](http://www.mqtcoplan.org).

## Fighting forest pests

The West Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) is a volunteer organization composed of environmental groups, governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, and private citizens working together to address invasive species on a local scale. The goal of regional CISMAs is to prioritize early detection and rapid response of invaders to prevent widespread establishment.

West Michigan CISMA partners, including the Ottawa Conservation District, are working hard to find and treat outbreaks of hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA). This tiny, aphid-like pest threatens Michigan's 176 million hemlock trees. The Ottawa Conservation District operates an invasives species strike team May through October to prioritize early detection and quick response to invasive species such as HWA.

The goal of regional CISMAs is to prioritize early detection and rapid response to prevent widespread establishment of invaders. The Invasive Species Strike Team in the Ottawa Conservation District operates May through October to prioritize early detection and quick response to invasive species.

The crews work under several grant-based programs, including the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Landscape Scale Restoration. The conservation district has also implemented a for-hire program, which helps interested landowners get at-cost treatment if they are in grant-covered areas.



*Figure 5. An HWA crew tags trees and checks for signs of infestation near West Shore Community College in Muskegon.*

## National Priority 3: Enhance public benefits from trees and forests.

### Reclaiming a degraded site: Belanger Park replanting project

Adding lush green space to a former industrial landscape, the Belanger Park replanting project in River Rouge has been a gift to the well-used community park. Mayor William Campbell and the Friends of the Rouge group worked with grants from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments and the USDA Forest Service to plant more than 80 trees, create a playscape and improve filtration of water runoff.

The community came together for the planting in June 2025. A total of 84 trees were planted, including Norway spruce, Siberian spruce, Greenspire linden, Blackgum, Hackberry, Tulip tree, Yellowwood, American hop hornbeam, Bald cypress, American Hornbeam, Eastern redbud and River birch.

The city has been surrounded by industry for decades, so the replanting has been a transformation for the park. The park now is inviting to a community that already has been using it for picnics, parties and fishing.



*Figure 6. River Rouge City Mayor William Campbell, Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator Debra Shore and EPA Project Coordinator Brian Kelly speak to the press at the replanting.*

The city puts together bus rides from the senior center to take residents out and make the park available and accessible to everyone. Community members played a big part in transforming the park, helping with the planting and motivating the changes to the park and, in the future, other parts of the city.

“We would like to do community tree planting where we have the residents come out and put in seedlings, even if it’s for their own home. We are always doing projects when we can,” said Karl Laub, the city’s community development director.

### DNR innovations include sale of carbon storage, promoting mass timber

The recently created DNR Office of Public Lands (OPL) has a mission of ensuring that Michigan’s public lands are well managed for the public good.

The OPL team coordinates a variety of activities on state forest land, state park and recreation lands and in wildlife and game areas.

“The department is actively responding to the growing impacts on the state’s natural resources, adapting management strategies for fish, wildlife, forests and water systems, including diversifying energy sources, and exploring innovations in carbon storage,” says Tori Irving, departmental specialist for OPL.

Two highlights of this work include promoting mass timber construction and the Big Wild Forest Carbon Project.

Mass timber is an innovative building trend that uses sustainable, engineered wood to create strong, fire-resistant panels and columns - think giant plywood made from layers of wood glued, nailed, or screwed together. This approach not only speeds up construction but also stores carbon long-term and reduces the carbon footprint of buildings. Michigan is embracing this technology with projects like the DNR’s Newberry Customer Service Center and Michigan State University’s STEM Teaching and Learning Facility.

Mass timber is strengthening the state’s forest products industry by creating new markets for Michigan-grown wood. Because wood is renewable and Michigan’s forests are sustainably managed, this innovation supports healthy forest management across public lands.

The Big Wild Forest Carbon Project was started in 2020 by the DNR Forest Resources Division and Anew Climate, with Michigan being the first state in the nation to leverage the carbon storage capacity of trees on state forest lands. The project is located on over 100,000 acres of the celebrated Pigeon River Country State Forest – affectionately dubbed "The Big Wild" by early conservationist P.S. Lovejoy. It creates a portfolio of carbon offset credits generated through sustainable forest management activities. Project development was completed in 2022 with DTE Energy purchasing the first decade of carbon offset credits. The total project term is 40 years.



*Figure 7. The DNR's new Customer Service Center in Newberry, Michigan, was built using mass timber materials made in part from Michigan-harvested wood.*

## Sharing our partners' challenges

The DNR held a series of four virtual meetings with stakeholder groups and partners in November and December of 2025 to gather information about key components of the five-year review. While accomplishments were summarized in the previous section, this section will focus on challenges we heard about in those meetings.

### **Policy, timing and operations**

Increasing restrictions such as oak wilt regulations, threatened and endangered (T&E) species protections, and frost laws are narrowing timber harvest windows for loggers and limiting operational flexibility, particularly for oak. Ice-storm damage has further reduced market opportunities, as mills no longer accept damaged wood. In addition, increasingly mild winters prevent frozen-ground access to wet sites, making it more difficult to operate in certain areas.

### **Labor, costs and supply chain**

Persistent shortages of skilled workers, such as truck drivers, combined with rising equipment costs and the need for additional markets to justify new machinery investments continue to challenge timber harvest operations. On some smaller privately owned forests, management harvests must be paired with profitable units, as poor-quality stands are often not economically viable.

### **Market limitations**

Market limitations continue to pose significant challenges. Oversized red and white pine, along with some hardwoods, often exceed mill processing capabilities, and there are few processors equipped to handle large-diameter logs. In addition, white pine markets remain weak. There is a need for incentives or major capital investments to retool mills, as market constraints affect both public and private forest management, and this need is expected to grow over time. More broadly, there is a pressing need for innovation, including expanded mass timber production, urban wood utilization, and the development of higher-value wood products.

### **Public perception, outreach and communications**

Public misunderstanding of forestry remains a significant challenge, as many people expect “park-like” conditions immediately after a harvest. There is also a need to reach new audiences, particularly out-of-state residents who purchased property in northern Michigan and may be unfamiliar with Michigan forest management practices. The “What’s happening here?” forest management signs are helpful but used inconsistently, and more are needed. Messaging is often fragmented, and public awareness of forest product benefits and forest health threats is limited. There is a need for clearer educational materials explaining forest succession and why active management is necessary. Previous

forestry public information campaigns were largely targeted toward southern Michigan, but northern Michigan residents also need this information.

There is confusion surrounding invasive species messaging, including rules for moving firewood and how individual actions contribute to the spread of pests. There is a need for stronger information sharing across partners, improved communication about emerging pests, and more coordinated social media capacity. There is potential funding support from groups such as Michigan Townships Association and Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association for a collective messaging effort. Working with media partners and local news outlets can further strengthen outreach efforts.

There was concern that it can be difficult to identify appropriate DNR contacts, and the DNR website is often challenging to navigate.

There has been a long gap since the last governor-led forestry summit. This was an important recognition of forestry's economic importance.

### **Training and capacity**

Stakeholders expressed that there is insufficient prescribed (RX) fire activity due to staffing, training, and leadership gaps. There is a growing need for training to prepare staff and partners for more complex forest types and use of prescribed fire in the future.

### **Qualified Forest Program**

Enrollment in the Qualified Forest Program (QFP) is growing faster than staff capacity, making monitoring and compliance increasingly challenging. Some landowners are unable to complete management activities because of a lack of available loggers or poor wood quality. Many well-intentioned landowners are struggling to complete their management plan.

### **Funding**

Some partners shared that they had experienced grant claw-backs and delays of federal funding, affecting their capacity. For FY 2026, Michigan's Invasive Species Grant Program experienced a budget cut from \$3.6M to \$2.4M despite rising pressure and public expectations.

## Our partners' priorities

This section will focus on priorities we heard about in stakeholder group and partner meetings held in late 2025, again summarized in a concise outline format.

### **Outreach and education**

There is a need to increase field-based education opportunities for students, teachers, and the public, including expanding programs such as Wheels to Woods. Michigan could also develop its own version of “Wood Magic” to engage youth in forestry education. Promoting forestry careers and the benefits of wood products should occur through coordinated, statewide messaging and partnerships.

### **Communications**

Partners discussed the need for unified forest industry communication across the state to the public. A DNR marketing campaign has made progress to highlight sustainable forestry, wood products, and the rationale for active forest management. Strengthening the push to involve industry and other partners, share success stories and improve transparency around funding sources and harvest decisions will help build public trust. Strengthening partnerships with statewide media, local media, industry and professional groups and sharing staff-produced content can further enhance outreach efforts.

### **Funding**

Explore forestry funding models from other states such as Pennsylvania and Missouri. The Municipal Forest Act should be updated to better support urban and community forestry (UCF). In addition, reforestation and regeneration funding must be protected to ensure long-term forest sustainability.

### **Fire**

At least 25 percent of prescribed (RX) fire needs should be implemented annually, with additional training to prepare for heightened fire risk in areas affected by ice storms.

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

A statewide urban forestry data system should be established to track inventories, canopy cover, equity considerations, and wood utilization. Developing a comprehensive Urban Canopy and Equity Strategy would provide clear direction. Securing dedicated sustainable,

long-term, dedicated funding for urban and community forestry is also critical to reduce reliance on federal grants.

### **Mass timber and market development**

Mass timber should be promoted for housing, public buildings, and other high-visibility projects, such as welcome centers or major developments in Detroit. Market innovation is also needed to address oversized pine and underutilized hardwood species, helping to expand utilization and strengthen forest-based economies.

### **Partnerships and collaboration**

Stronger coordination among forestry stakeholders is necessary, along with better integration of the private forest community. Connecting with other states and professional networks can help share best practices and strengthen overall forest management efforts.

## **Our partners' data, GIS, and outreach needs**

We asked our stakeholder groups and partners to share what needs they may have as we move into the last half of the planning period. We have grouped those needs by themes we created from the input received.

### **Datasets and storytelling**

Public-friendly story maps that connect forest data with videos and photos could help tell a clearer management story. A comprehensive story map following the journey from forest to logger to final product could highlight the value of Michigan-made and American-made wood products. In addition, a statewide, high-resolution forest structure map showing young, mature, and late-successional forests across ownership types — and made publicly available — would improve transparency and planning. A GIS product that maps climate risk against forest composition, such as ecosystem type and tree diversity, would support planning efforts.

### **Economic and industry data**

There is a need for deeper analysis of unprofitable stands, labor dynamics, and the impacts of imports and mill quotas on the forest products industry. An assessment of barriers affecting the logging workforce and overall market viability would also help inform policy and investment decisions.

### **Private lands**

Ecological, ownership, and socio-economic data are needed for private forest landowners.

This could include lists of realtors and Municipal Forest Act properties, as well as private landowner contact information that reflects length of ownership.

### **Urban forestry**

A statewide urban forestry inventory and dashboard would help track canopy change, biodiversity, climate resilience, and equity gaps, and could guide strategy development. A standardized statewide Urban Tree Inventory System should also integrate private-land plantings, such as distinguishing between right-of-way trees and backyard trees in cities like Detroit. Mapping school and campus properties for shade, heat exposure, and planting needs would further support climate adaptation. Tools should also be developed to help small communities effectively use and interpret inventory data.

### **Fire**

A centralized prescribed fire database would improve coordination. Spatial data identifying mills that can tolerate charred wood would help guide prescribed fire planning decisions.

# Forest Action Plan - Michigan DNR highlights

Goal 1: Enhance coordination among programs, stakeholders and partners (national priorities 1 and 3) .

Strategy 1.1: Improve oversight and delivery of the five cooperative programs to help ensure the provision of ecosystem services so important to Michigan's people.

## *Accomplishments*

### **Forest Resources Division**

- Annual engagement meetings were held in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025
- Plans are in place to engage stakeholders upon completion of the 2025 SFAP Review

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Increased staffing by one full-time equivalent

### **Community Wildfire Protection Program**

- Community Wildfire Defense Grant coordinator was hired in October of 2023 to coordinate outreach among communities and stakeholders
- At least one new community applied for a grant

## *Challenges*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- UCF needs sustainable, long-term, dedicated funding
- There is limited staff to accomplish objectives

## *Priorities for the next five years*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Secure sustainable, long-term, dedicated funding for UCF
- Collaborate within division/agencies to more efficiently deliver program assistance

## *Data needs*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Lacking technology and data (e.g. tree canopy, i-Tree, etc.)

## *New issues*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Changing federal priorities and funding
- Changing community points of contact

Strategy 1.2: Forest Resources and the Marketing and Outreach divisions collaborate with stakeholders and the Eastern Region State and Private Forestry technology transfer process to develop and deliver comprehensive communication messages and engagement activities

## *Accomplishments*

### **Forest Resources Division**

- Added SFAP engagement to full-time Volunteer Engagement Specialist in 2022 to increase SFAP capacity

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Increased subscribers to weekly UCF electronic newsletter from 14,000 to 20,500

## *Priorities for the next five years*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Collaborate with FRD communication staff and DNR Marketing and Outreach Division (MOD) to improve social media presence

## *Data needs*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Work with MOD to create a shared events calendar to increase reach of outreach efforts

Strategy 1.3: Develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to deal with cooperative program challenges that includes stakeholders

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Forest Resources Division**

- Held annual stakeholder engagement meeting to gather meaningful input from stakeholders and partners

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Participation by UCF program staff and partners (UCF advisory council) in annual SFAP stakeholder session and related meetings

#### **Forest Stewardship**

- Participates in the annual SFAP Stakeholder meeting

### *Challenges*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Limited time to accomplish objectives
- Coming up with effective ways to engage with stakeholders in valuable way

### *Priorities for the next five years*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Identify ways to obtain and use stakeholder input to provide value for both stakeholders and program staff
- Better utilize advisory council to improve stakeholder engagement

Strategy 1.4: Ensure that any government or department climate action plan includes communication and engagement activities and allows for collaboration with partner organizations

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Forest Resources Division**

- Division staff participated in several sprint teams related to Governor Gretchen Whitmer's "Mi Healthy Climate Plan" initiatives such as renewable energy

## **Urban and Community Forestry**

- UCF program staff have attended and provided information tables at the two “Mi Healthy Climate” conferences in 2023 and 2024

## **Forest Resources Division**

- Sprint teams shifted into long-term committees with division membership; additional opportunities exist to re-engage

## *Challenges*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Current climate plan does not acknowledge the value of community trees for climate adaptation and resilience

## *Priorities for the next five years*

### **Forest Resources Division**

- Reassert current plans that contain renewable energy guidance developed by staff from resource managing divisions with stakeholder and public review and input

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Incorporating the role/benefits from community trees in future climate plans and updates

## *Data needs*

### **Forest Resources Division**

- More analysis and research done on CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions of solar energy production (in lieu of burning fossil fuels) compared to CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration rates and storage capacity of forested cover types and assessment of other values represented by forested stands (recreation, timber production, ecological, habitat, ecosystem services, etc.)

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Gathering and synthesizing existing data for incorporation in climate plans
- Continuous monitoring of economic impacts from community trees

## Goal 2: Advocating for sound forestry practices (national priorities 1, 2 and 3)

### Strategy 2.1: Address social and political barriers to improve planning and management of Michigan's forest resources

#### *Accomplishments*

##### **Forest Resources Division**

- Engagement opportunities for the new State Forest Management Plan included a focused session on gathering input to help establish desired future conditions of important elements of the State Forest

##### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Secured \$7.5 million in federal Inflation Reduction Act funding for investment in underserved/disadvantaged communities
- Served on two committees and facilitated meetings for seven communities to improve forest planning and management

##### **Community Wildfire Protection Program**

- Increase the number of communities with completed CWPPs
- Engage local communities about the importance of CWPPs
- Added two new plans and updated three since 2020

##### **Forest Health**

- Updated the state's decontamination policy directing staff to take actions to prevent the spread of invasive species
- Implemented prevention programs such as "Play, Clean, Go"; "Don't move firewood"
- Created Oak Wilt guidelines
- Led the update of the HWA Statewide Strategy
- Participated in HWA managers meetings
- Hosted the first national Oak Wilt managers' meeting
- Provided technical expertise and scoring for the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program
- Participate in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative planning and implementation

- Partner with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) to host the bi-annual Interagency Forest Invasives Committee
- Participate in the monthly survey call hosted by MDARD

### **Forest Stewardship**

- FSP works with partners at Society of American Foresters, Michigan Forest Association, Michigan Association of Consulting Foresters and Michigan Association of Timbermen on policy issues impacting family forests

### *Challenges*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Changes in federal priorities (2025)
- Lack of sustainable, long-term, dedicated funding for UCF program

### *Priorities for the next five years*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Secure sustainable, long-term, dedicated funding for program
- Collaborate within divisions and across agencies to more efficiently deliver program assistance

### *New issues*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Loss of Climate and Economic Screening Tool with new federal transition
- Potential loss of i-Tree tools due to federal government changes in software policy funding.

Strategy 2.2: Using the best available science, all partners should collaborate to implement a landscape approach to tree and forest management that can address all aspects of sustainable forest management in forested landscapes and urban settings

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Forest Resources Division**

- Michigan Invasive Species Program communication and grant efforts in conjunction with the Agriculture and Rural Development and the Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy departments

## Urban and Community Forestry

- Through collaboration with internal and external partners, several initiatives were undertaken/sustained including:
  - Oak Wilt Coalition
  - MSU Forestry Partnership [for Ecosystem Research and Management](#)
  - Detroit Tree Equity Partnership
  - Green Macomb

## Forest Health

- \$1.5 million Early Detection and Response fund through the Michigan Invasive Species Program
- Employ an entomologist and pathologist as well as invasive species specialist on DNR staff
- New invasive species specialists, entomologists and pathologists out of the St. Paul office
- Helped fund a forest pathologist position at Michigan State University
- Addition of Invasive Species Response Field Coordinator position at MDARD
- Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area groups (CISMAs) are strengthening networks to respond to forest health needs
- “Eyes on the forest” was expanded to include invasive plants
- Pathways project – Promotes and certifies clean fill, clean mulch, clean compost and clean gravel
- Beech Leaf Disease Action Plan, Asian Longhorned Beetle Action Plan, Spotted Lanternfly Action Plan, draft Balsam Woolly Adelgid plan
- Response plans for all watch-list terrestrial invasive plants

## Challenges

- Funding for program and program grants
- High barrier for implementation of urban wood utilization
- Partner interest varies

### *Priorities for the next five years*

- Continue collaboration with internal and external partners in related initiatives
- Secure additional funding to implement projects

### *Data needs*

- New science and information that pertains to UCF as it becomes available

Strategy 2.3: All partners engaged in the management of trees, forests and forest values should engage in continuing education for staff

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Promotion of educational and training opportunities to partners via weekly UCF electronic newsletter distributed to more than 20,000 subscribers

### *Challenges*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Funding
- Staffing
- Partner priorities
- Technical materials

### *Priorities for the next five years*

- Encourage and foster education and funding for staff
- Increase access for educational and training opportunities

### *New issues*

- Communicating the changing American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 Tree Care standards to partners and ensuring practitioners can advocate for changes in standards.

## Goal 3: Increase economic productivity and benefits (national priority 3)

Strategy 3.1: Communicate and engage with landowners and professional foresters to ensure awareness of ecosystem services values, availability of forest management information and how to collaborate in forest management

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Providing technical assistance and resources for communities to value their urban forest resources through both quantitative and qualitative data (i-Tree, Urban Tree Canopy metrics). (2 Economic impact studies for UCF - Regional/National)

#### **Forest Stewardship Program**

- In 2025, MI FSP provided eight Sustainable Forestry Initiative trainings for 843 loggers on the Fiber Sourcing Standard to protect water quality and increase landowner education

### *Challenges*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Interest in learning and adopting new information

### *Priorities for the next five years*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Increase network building of professional foresters

### *Data needs*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Maintain updated staff contact lists for relevant Michigan departments

## Goal 4: Communicate the value and importance of forestry (national priority 3)

Strategy 4.1: Communicate directly with the public, wildland urban interface landowners, youth, and state politicians about the principles of forest management; how certification systems work to ensure sound management; and how managing to provide forest values leads to multiple benefits from the forest for the people of Michigan

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Forest Resources Division**

- Numerous virtual and in-person engagement opportunities were provided beginning in 2021 for public and stakeholders to learn about how and why we manage the state forest, including the principles that help align the State Forest Management Plan with the Forest Action Plan
- The Forest Resources Division continued its public information advertising campaign, which kicked off in 2017 and was revamped in 2021. The campaign, mostly focused on the Detroit area and Southern Lower Peninsula, seeks to help people appreciate Michigan's efforts at sustainable forestry, understand the wood products industry and become aware of the many benefits that forests and urban trees bring across the state. Surveys show the campaign has been successful in helping people understand forests and forestry. It has made millions of impressions and outperformed industry benchmarks throughout its existence. For example, the spring 2025 campaign totaled 26 million impressions and 9.5 million video views. At the request of the forest products industry, the campaign provided a limited presence in two northern Michigan media markets in 2024.
- The outreach/communication team re-styled an exhibit at the DNR's Outdoor Adventure Center in Detroit to show visitors the many, sometimes surprising ways they use wood and wood products every day; further updates are expected to follow. About 150,000 visitors come through the Outdoor Adventure Center each year.
- The MI Trees campaign, online at [Michigan.gov/MITrees](https://Michigan.gov/MITrees), encourages Michigan residents to plant new trees and pin them on an interactive map. The map updates to show how many trees have been planted by the public (nearly 160,000 so far) and

how many have been planted by the DNR (more than 29 million) with a goal of 50 million by 2030.

- Project Learning Tree (PLT) professional development helps K-12 educators incorporate Michigan forests and forestry into their curriculums. Topics explored in the classroom range from forest ecosystems and products to urban forestry, and timber measurement. Over the past three years, 931 educators have participated in PLT training events, potentially reaching 334,980 Michigan students with forestry content.

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Promoting urban forest management including species diversity, urban wood utilization, site-selection, benefits, Tree City USA, etc. through outreach/education, technical and financial assistance to communities with over 5 million residents annually. Notably, the team in 2025 created a [new resource](#) to help municipalities and residents select appropriate trees for their communities and their properties.
- Partnered with WDET radio, beginning in 2024 in Detroit, to fund reporting efforts focused on forestry-related issues in the Detroit area and across the state.

### **Forest Health**

- Published annual Forest Health Highlights
- Support public reporting through the Michigan Invasive Species Information Network (MISIN)
- Helped implement “Eyes on the Forest” program
- Multiple press releases each year to urge action for landowners. For example, “Check your trees” press release in August 2025 asked everyone to look for specific invasive forest pests. Annually we publish the Oak Wilt press release to announce the high-risk season and actions to prevent spreading oak wilt
- Update and manage online reporting tools for Oak Wilt and Heterobasidion root disease (HRD)

### **Forest Stewardship**

- Newsletter goes to 21,000 private lands subscribers several times each year.
- The Wheels to Woods program provides transportation grants to schools for educational field trips to a nearby forest. Over the past nine years, Wheels to Woods funded 619 field trips for 66,821 students, teachers, outdoor educators and parents.

- Administration of Wheels to Woods transferred from the Michigan Tree Farm Committee to the Michigan Sustainable Forestry Initiative in 2025. The program has been funded by grants from USDA Forest Service through the Michigan Tree Farm Committee in partnership with the FSP Program.

## *Challenges*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Funding
- Staffing
- Partner priorities
- Technical materials
- Lack of awareness (of the program)

## *Priorities for the next five years*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Secure sustainable, long-term, dedicated funding for program
- Engage public with current staffing and resources available

## *New issues*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Changing political landscape and funding uncertainty

Strategy 4.2: Increase awareness among Michigan’s forest owners, partners and residents about forests, partnership opportunities and the benefits of collaboration that will benefit all residents of Michigan

## *Accomplishments*

### **Forest Resources Division**

- FRD forest planning staff participated in a panel discussion hosted by Michigan Forest Association aimed at the importance of forest management and impacts the 2025 ice storm had on forests across the northern Lower Peninsula, and what assistance programs are available to landowners.

- FRD planning staff presented an in-depth look at the ice storm impacts to the state forest during a monthly webinar Michigan Forest Association hosts to help inform forest landowners on the benefits and values of forest management.

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Created an annual UCF program report
- Developed new UCF program banners for use at outreach events 36
- Conducted presentations at conferences and other public events
- Conducted radio and media interviews
- Developed UCF related public press releases
- UCF electronic newsletter (increased readership by 67% between 2020-2025)
- Facilitated and sustained program partnerships via financial grant assistance

### **Forest Health**

- Technical and financial support to CISMAs working on forest pests and invasive plants
- Event tables showcasing DNR forest health issues
- Give numerous forest health presentations to local groups and communities
- Trainings to professionals such as Conservation Districts, Association of Consulting Foresters, International Society of Arboriculture, etc.
- Worked with MDARD and other state divisions to update and maintain the state's Invasive Species Watch List. Mountain pine beetle and lesser celandine are recent additions to the watch list

### **Forest Stewardship**

- Portable bridges: Michigan Forest Stewardship Program has \$1.5 million in funding from USDA Forest Service and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to purchase portable bridges and timber mats to use on private forest lands.

### **Forest Legacy**

- A communication plan has been developed specifically focused on the IRA funding opportunity
- Additional communications and outreach efforts was prioritized in 2025 due to increased capacity for FLP

- The Forest Legacy Program nomination application has been updated to prioritize climate resilient landscapes and has been in use since 2021

## *Challenges*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Funding
- Staffing
- Process for generating new communication material

### **Forest Legacy**

- Funding and capacity have been the biggest challenges

## *Priorities for the next five years*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Increase diversity of delivery methods (e.g., more webinars)
- More efficient and effective development of communication and education materials

### **Forest Legacy**

- Significant focus on outreach and communication efforts to increase awareness of the program

## *New issues*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- How communication and advertising have evolved (more digital)
- Mindfulness of language and format (diversity, accessibility)

## **Strategy 4.3: Effectively communicate priorities, requirements, relevance and focus of cooperative programs to the people of Michigan**

## *Accomplishments*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Provide weekly outreach via UCF e-news (contents often focus on program priorities)
- Participate in public and stakeholder meetings for State Forest Action Plan

- Promote UCF program priorities via press releases and social media, especially related to program grant opportunities

### **Forest Health**

- Implementing portions of the statewide MI Healthy Climate plan

### **Forest Stewardship**

- Newsletter goes to 21,000 private lands subscribers several times each year.

### **Forest Legacy**

- Beginning in 2021, the FLP implemented and uses The Nature Conservancy's climate-resilient landscapes in project evaluation and scoring on an ongoing basis.

## *Challenges*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Funding
- Staffing
- Process for generating new communication material
- Rapidly shifting priorities poses a challenge for communicating priorities

## *Priorities for the next five years*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Increase diversity of delivery methods (e.g., more webinars)
- More efficient and effective development of communication materials
- Increase awareness of the program and the services the program provides to the people of Michigan

## *New issues*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- How communication and advertising have evolved (more digital)
- Mindfulness of language and format (diversity, accessibility)

## Goal 5: Involve partners and the public in managing Michigan's forests (national priority 1, 2 and 3)

Strategy 5.1: Collaborate with a diverse group of partners including state agencies, land trusts and other conservation organizations to protect working forests

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Forest Resources Division**

- FRD staff share and gather information at quarterly advisory committee meetings with groups like the Forest Management Advisory Committee and the Timber and Forest Products Advisory Council.
- FRD staff also attend all quarterly Wildlife Technical Committee (WTC) meetings where tribal natural resource professionals collaborate on and discuss wildlife habitat and forest management activities.
- FRD staff administer the more than 2.2 million acres of private lands enrolled in the [Commercial Forest Program](#) are open to public foot traffic for hunting, trapping and fishing.

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Collaborate with multiple groups and meet with them:
  - Once a year: Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Beautification Council, Michigan Timberman's Association, State Forest Action Plan Meeting, Michigan Land Bank Association
  - Twice a year: Michigan Urban and Community Forestry Council, Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, Green Macomb, Michigan Green Industry Association
  - Various times a year: Greening of Detroit, Department of Energy, Great Lakes and Environment, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Michigan Department of Transportation, Arbor Day Foundation, American Forests, Michigan State University Forestry, ISA Michigan, LGBTree (Affinity group of Urban and Community Forestry Society), WDET (Detroit public radio station)

#### **Forest Health**

- Partner with the Michigan Invasive Species Coalition, the statewide coalition for Michigan's Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area groups

## **Forest Stewardship**

- FSP Advisory Committee meets quarterly via Zoom

## **Forest Legacy**

- The FLP subcommittee of the Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee has been reengaged, meets quarterly, and the FLP staff participates in these meetings

## *Challenges*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Funding
- Staffing
- Partner priorities
- Maintenance cost of relationships (time)

## *Priorities for the next five years*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Expand and maintain network of partners
- Empower partners to lead projects that we support

### **Forest Legacy**

- Increase in outreach efforts and collaboration with conservation organizations and forest landowners
- Implementation of projects currently being developed once they are funded

## *New issues*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Reduced opportunities for travel (overnight stays) and participation in professional organizations

Strategy 5.2: Engage with forest landowners to encourage the protection and sound management of privately-owned forests through collaborative programs

## *Accomplishments*

### **Forest Stewardship**

- FY 2023: Michigan developed 148 forest stewardship plans covering 29,786 acres for landowners, school forests and Benzie County

- FY 2025 - Michigan developed 62 forest stewardship plans covering 9,267 acres for landowners and school forests
- \$2 million IRA grant from USDA Forest Service to inform landowners about emerging markets such as carbon offsets, agroforestry and water funds. Partners include a dozen land conservancies and the Michigan Forest Association. Partners spent \$95,663 in FY2025 to provide information to 316 landowners with a conservation easement.

### **Forest Legacy**

- The program has worked and collaborated with large forestland owners and conservation organizations to identify, target, and protect large forest areas (500+ acres). Examples of these projects are Black River Ranch and Michigamme Highlands.

## *Challenges*

### **Forest Legacy**

- Funding and capacity have been the biggest challenges

Strategy 5.3: Assess outreach and engagement needs to ensure an appropriate distribution of resources across the state

## *Accomplishments*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Developing program grant and technical assistance [tracking applications](#) to visualize distribution of assistance and gaps where future assistance should be directed.
- Regular communication and meetings with internal communications staff and the Marketing and Outreach Division helps UCF program assess outreach and engagement needs statewide.

### **Forest Health**

- Publications including pest alerts, annual Forest Health Highlights, etc.

## **Community Wildfire Protection Program**

- Produced a video to explain the process of creating a fuel break to help the public understand the process and the protection it provides.
- Outreach in local communities to raise fire awareness
- Fire staff meets regularly with local fire departments and other partners

### *Challenges*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Funding
- Staffing
- Difficult to collect data

### *Priorities for the next five years*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Collaborate with other units, sections, and divisions to combine tracking efforts and reduce duplicative work
- More outreach to geographies outside of southeast Michigan, especially small, rural communities

### *Data needs*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Additional monitoring and tracking of data related to engagement with various resources and delivery methods

**Strategy 5.4: Develop partnerships to address the threats and impacts to forests from major stressors such as climate change, invasive pests and native insects and diseases.**

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Forest Resources Division**

- DNR planning staff collaborated with Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science to develop a strategy for integrating measures to help adapt, mitigate, or resist the affects of climate change in the State Forest Management Plan

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- UCF program staff work with the Forest Health unit to assist with addressing threats, response and monitoring for invasive species, insect/disease issues and providing appropriate outreach and resources to partners and the public (e.g., MI Community Tree Selection Guide, pest bulletins, Oak Wilt Coalition membership)

## **Community Wildfire Protection Program**

- Worked to engage all counties in Michigan in the Community Wildfire Defense Grant program and Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan programs for wildland fire protection

## **Forest Health**

- Supporting the statewide coverage of CISMAs and leading the HWA Coordinating Committee
- Co-hosting the Interagency Forest Invasives Committee
- Collaborating with MDARD and EGLE in leading Michigan's Invasive Species Program
- Participate in the partner monthly survey meeting hosted by MDARD
- Serve as member on the Terrestrial Invasive Species core team, a branch of the state's invasive species program
- Participate in the Oak Wilt Coalition

## *Challenges*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Funding
- Staffing
- Private industry expectations

### **Community Wildfire Protection Program**

- Little to no response from county governments regarding efforts to create CWPPs
- Difficulty getting groups to apply for grants and successfully get funded

## *Priorities for the next five years*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Expand and maintain network
- Seek different funding streams for invasive species management
- Keeping resources up to date
- Unify messaging between partners

## *Data needs*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Data related to climate change interactions with invasive species may be reduced going forward

## *New issues*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Shifting federal priorities & budget limitations

Strategy 5.5: In cooperation with urban tree and forest managers, actively work to establish standards, policies, green infrastructure plans and best management practices and improve awareness and engagement in actively managing urban trees and forests to benefit the people of the community

## *Accomplishments*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- From 2020 to 2024, provided grants to 34 communities to conduct public tree inventories, develop management plans, standards, specifications and/or ordinances to improve public tree management and care
- Developed updated tree species selection guide for communities and homeowners, based on best available current science

## *Challenges*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Partners may not be aware of the standards, able to access them, or have the capacity to use/implement them
- Cost for standards, inventory, and management plans
- People who act as tree champions retiring or leaving communities
- Funding

## *Priorities for the next five years*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Unified messaging surrounding the updates to the ANSI A300 Tree Care standards to raise awareness about the standards and promote their use/adoption in simplest terms possible for broadest use
- Alleviate financial and capacity barriers for communities to engage in tree inventories and develop sustainable management plans

## *New issues*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- New policy development and requirements (Tree protection ordinance, Tree City USA)
- Make sure the ANSI 300 Tree Care standards are relevant, up to date and communicated broadly and simply, including opportunities for stakeholders to provide input for future updates

**Strategy 5.6: Engage with volunteers and professionals to provide training for participation in citizen-science opportunities and use of public data sets**

## *Accomplishments*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Outreach and promotion of MI Trees mapping tool for individuals to self-report tree plantings across the state

## *Challenges*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Time investment
- Staffing
- Quality of data in question
- Technical limitations of data tools

## *Priorities for the next five years*

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Continue advancing outward-facing datasets and resources (e.g., ArcGIS Experience maps) to increase access to public data

- Identifying gaps where community science is appropriate

### *New issues*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Understanding what's possible and what resource needs and limitations are for implementation of various applications, maps, and associated functionalities

Strategy 5.7: Engage with the private sector to provide professional development opportunities, tools and training relevant to management for healthy trees and forests and their associated benefits

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Collaborating with partners in higher education (MSU Forestry), industry (ISA-MI) and government (municipalities) to provide professional training, tools and resources opportunities (e.g., TreeWork 101 workforce program, ArborCon presentation)

### *Challenges*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Staffing and funding for workshops and travel
- Varied interest from private sector

### *Priorities for the next five years*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Strengthen and secure support from private industry professionals

### *Data needs*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Determining which private entities within Michigan and out-of-state provide work in the field

## Goal 6: Monitor the condition of the forest and impacts of our work (national priority 1 and 2)

Strategy 6.1: Address the needs for inventory and monitoring and provide for the establishment of baseline urban tree and forest data, forest health data, recreational use, risk assessment, future projections and measurement of conservation outcomes through collaboration with partners and citizen-science projects for the five federal cooperative programs

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Forest Health**

- Aerial survey of approximately 20 million acres every year
- Created an early detection and response multi-department workgroup update and track the state's Invasive Species Watch list for species that have been identified as posing an immediate or potential threat to Michigan. Members use a risk-screening tool to identify and assess risk of dozens of potential invasive species each year.
- The workgroup also provides a process for delisting from the Watch List
- Watch List viewer to track and make available the distribution of Watch List species in Michigan.
- Track all reports of pests on the landscape and submit a pest conditions report to USDA Forest Service every year that gets incorporated into the national overview of forest health concerns
- Hired GIS Specialist to enhance GIS tools to help citizens and partners track and report invasive species in their areas: Oak Wilt and HRD viewers
- Provide support for external databases such as the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network provide multiple opportunities
- New Invasive Species Watch List viewer

### *Challenges*

#### **Urban and Community Forestry**

- Waiting for USDA Forest Service to complete a full cycle (seven years) of data collection/analysis/reporting of Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data in Detroit metro area; This was done in 2025
- A lack of funding is preventing additional data collection in other metro areas of the state or to accelerate a data collection cycle

## Goal 7: Improve understanding of forests through research (national priority 1 and 2)

Strategy 7.1: Expand the scope of and support for federal and university-based research and associated extension

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Forest Health**

- Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (MISGP) annually funds \$2 million to \$4 million to address strategic issues of prevention, detection, eradication and control for both terrestrial invasive species and aquatic invasive species in Michigan.
- Partnered with several BIL High Priority Regional Invasive Species projects focusing on multi state research projects to advance knowledge and create new tools to address invasive forest species.
- Contributed funding for Michigan State University Pathologist position
- Swallowwort and Knotweed biocontrol, MISGP funded
- Established a permit to conduct HWA biocontrol in MI
- Multi-state research projects such as beech leaf disease surveys and oak wilt vectors
- Publish a Forest Health Needs List in partnership with the Northeast Midwest states to prioritize research and funding needs
- Partnered with USFS Research to amplify use of the Forest Health Needs List

### *Challenges*

- Declining research funding
- MISGP funding reduced affecting potential research proposals
- Reduced staffing at USFS

### *Priorities for the next five years*

- Partner with new MSU Pathologist

### *Data needs*

- Remote sensing tools are not readily available to forest health specialists

### *New issues*

- Invasive worms and mushrooms

## Goal 8: Implement actions to improve Michigan’s forests (national priorities 1, 2 and 3)

Strategy 8.1: Work with stakeholders and private landowners to improve forest planning and implementation of management practices across the state.

### *Accomplishments*

#### **Forest Health**

- Natural pine/Diplodia recommendations
- Oak Wilt guidance and HRD Guidance
- Natural pine guidance presented during trainings
- Natural Pine Guidance on the groundwork
- Field surveys, Oak Wilt treatments, HWA treatments

## Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

This section discusses how the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (formerly referred to as BIL) SFAP implementation funding is important to support the goals and strategies in the SFAP.

### Total IIJA funding to support Michigan SFAP Implementation:

**\$9,150,750**

### DNR-led Projects

#### **2022/2023 Community Wildfire Defense Grant: \$800,000**

Grant supports staff time to promote grant opportunities to work with communities and local governmental agencies around the state to encourage or educate them on what they can apply for. It provides help with their local plan development or mitigation efforts to reduce or prepare for wildfire in their communities.

#### **2022/2023 State Fire Assistance (SFA): \$548,769**

Grant provides the opportunity for Michigan to address critical fire management needs and to develop fire preparedness capability to respond to fire prevention, wildland urban interface, hazardous fuel treatment, wildland fire training, initial attack for fire suppression activities, and to support fire compact opportunities.

**2022/2023 Volunteer Fire Assistance: \$126,770**

Cost-share grants issued to various volunteer fire departments throughout Michigan with the maximum grant amount being \$4,999. Grant funds are used to purchase supplies and equipment.

**2022/2023 SFAP Forest Health: \$1,263,226**

The funding for implementation of state Forest Action Plans will bolster Michigan's ability to put boots on the ground in collaboration with other agencies and partners. Funds are being used to increase internal capacity and technology to improve our understanding of risks and improve our ability to manage forests across the state.

**2022/2023 SFAP Fire: \$22,774**

The funding was used to upgrade DNR fire reporting information technology systems to better integrate automatically with the newest national reporting systems. This also added the ability for other entities in Michigan to report and track prescribed burns so there is a comprehensive system for tracking and reporting prescribed burn accomplishments in Michigan.

**2022/2023 Invasive Species capacity: \$88,809**

The funding adds capacity to Michigan's forest health program to survey and treat high priority invasive species and develop new outreach and educational materials.

**2022/2023 Revegetation: \$320,000**

Grant is being used to prepare multiple state properties for establishment of seed orchards for species of ecologic/economic importance. These orchards will greatly increase seed availability of known provenances for up to 13 different tree species, which can then be used to contract-grow nursery stock to meet reforestation objectives.

**2023-2025 Portable bridges for Master Loggers: \$1,575,000**

The DNR is partnering with the Sustainable Resources Institute to purchase, distribute, and track portable bridges and mats to make them available for use on private lands. DNR and the Institute will coordinate with the Michigan Association of Timbermen to make these bridges available for Michigan master loggers who represents 500 logging, trucking, and sawmill companies.

**2024 SFAP Forest Health: \$699,000**

Funding Funds are being used for increasing internal capacity to put boots on the ground and increased technology to improve our understanding of risks and improve our ability to manage forests across the state.

### **2024 Volunteer Fire Assistance: \$106,631**

Grants issued to various volunteer fire departments throughout Michigan with the maximum grant amount being \$4,999. Grant funds are used to purchase supplies and equipment.

### **2025 Community Wildfire Defense Grant: \$400,000**

Grant supports staff time to promote grant opportunities work with communities and local governmental agencies around the state to encourage or educate them on what they can apply for, help with their local plan development or mitigation efforts to reduce or prepare for wildfire in their communities.

### **2025 State Fire Assistance: \$307,645**

Grant provides the opportunity for Michigan to address critical fire management needs and to develop fire preparedness capability to respond to fire prevention, wildland urban interface needs, hazardous fuel treatment, wildland fire training, initial attack for fire suppression activities, and to support fire compact opportunities.

### **2025 Arctic grayling: \$2,500,000**

This project is necessary to replace six improperly sized or failing road-stream crossings on State Forest lands that are barriers to aquatic organism passage in the upper Manistee River watershed. The project will specifically reconnect and improve 46 miles of stream habitat necessary to reintroduce the Arctic Grayling to the upper Manistee River watershed.

## **Partner-led Projects**

**Partner:** Midwest Invasive Plant Network

### **Prevention and early detection of invasive plants in high priority forests: \$392,126**

The Midwest Invasive Plant Network is developing resources for harmonizing invasive plant regulations and resources to enhance rapid-response efforts. Established participatory science teams in Wisconsin (Wisconsin First Detector Network), Minnesota (Terrestrial Invasive Participatory Science), and Michigan (Eyes on the Forest) are leading efforts to monitor for early detection species and improve knowledge of distribution throughout the tri-state area. While efforts will be focused on the three states, resources created are intended to assist the entire region. This project leverages the Network's efforts in establishing the [Woody Invasives of the Great Lakes collaborative](#).

## Conclusion

The 2025 five-year review of the Michigan Statewide Forest Action Plan demonstrates a robust and collaborative effort to manage and protect Michigan's 20 million acres of forest land (p. 3). Through the dedicated work of the (DNR) federal partners, and a diverse network of stakeholders, significant progress has been made towards the three national priorities: conserving working forests, protecting against threats, and enhancing public benefits (p. 4).

Key takeaways from the Five-Year Review:

**Successes in collaboration:** Implementing innovative programs such as the Big Wild Forest Carbon Project and the promotion of mass timber construction highlights Michigan's leadership in sustainable forestry and climate adaptation (p. 17).

**Funding with an impact:** Federal support through the Inflation Reduction Act has been instrumental, providing \$6.4 million to assist private landowners and \$7.5 million for urban forestry in underserved communities (p. 8, 27). Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding to support Michigan SFAP Implementation totaled \$9,150,750 over the last five years

**Persistent challenges:** Stakeholders identified critical hurdles including labor shortages, market limitations, long term sustainable funding and the operational impacts of a changing climate, such as shorter winter harvest windows (p. 17). Frequent severe weather events have negatively impacted Michigan's forests causing forest managers and landowners to be faced with difficult challenging decisions. Impacts from extreme weather events that have happened in the last five years including tornadoes, wildfires, wind events, ice storms and floods and are expected to continue throughout this planning period and beyond.

**Strategic priorities:** Looking ahead to 2030, the focus will shift toward securing sustainable state funding, expanding field-based education, and developing statewide data systems for urban canopy and prescribed fire management (p. 20,-23).

This mid-point assessment reaffirms that teamwork is vital to keeping Michigan's forests thriving (p. 7). By addressing the identified data needs and refining strategies based on partner input, Michigan is well-positioned to ensure its forests continue to provide immense ecological, economic, and recreational value for generations to come (p. 4, 21).