

VII. EXISTING CONSERVATION MEASURES

A. State Commercial Forest Program

The Commercial Forest Program provides a property tax reduction to private landowners as an incentive to retain and manage forestland for long-term timber production. Landowners participating in this program pay a reduced property tax of \$1.10 per acre listed in the program. Additionally, the State of Michigan pays \$1.20 per acre annually to each county where land is listed in the program. There are approximately 2.2 million acres listed in this program under the ownership of nearly 1,300 private landowners. Landowners include private individuals, clubs, forest industry, and other businesses. Landowners in this program agree to develop, maintain and manage the land as commercial forest through planting, natural reproduction, or other silvicultural practices.

B. Forest Stewardship Program

The purpose of the Federal Forest Stewardship program is "to encourage the long-term stewardship of non-industrial forest lands by assisting owners of such lands to more actively manage their forests and related resources by utilizing existing state, federal and private sector resource management expertise and assistance programs." The program provides information and assistance to help owners understand and evaluate alternative actions they take, including managing and enhancing productivity of timber, fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, wetlands, recreation resources, and aesthetic value of forest lands. A key component of the Forest Stewardship Program is the development of a stewardship plan, which provides the landowner with baseline information about the timber, wildlife, soils, and water and recreation opportunities on the property. The plan provides specific recommendations to accomplish the landowner goals and objectives. A companion program, the Forest Land Enhancement Program, will provide cost-share assistance to forest landowners for development of the plan and to implement recommended improvements.

C. Forest Land Enhancement Program

The 2002 Farm Bill provides significant support for conservation of private lands through a variety of programs. One of these is the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP), which has the purpose of "providing financial, technical, educational and related assistance to State Foresters to assist private landowners in actively managing their land." The FLEP supports the existing Federal Forest Stewardship Program of preparing multi-resource management plans. The criteria for the FLEP program are set by advisory committees in each state, following guidelines established at the national level. Landowners can seek cost-share assistance for implementation of a management plan on up to 1,000 acres, for not less than 10 years. The FLEP replaces the Stewardship

Incentive Program (SIP) and implements the landowners' Forest Stewardship Program.

D. Enhanced Community Fire Protection

Also part of the 2002 Farm Bill, this program is designed to enhance community protection from wildfire. Again, working through the State Foresters, the program helps to: "(1) focus the Federal role in promoting optimal firefighting efficiency at the Federal, State and local levels; (2) expand outreach and education programs to homeowners and communities about fire protection; and (3) establish space around homes and property that is defensible against wildfire."

E. Cooperative Protection

A cooperative effort between local, state, and federal fire agencies plays a major role in the protection of Michigan's forest lands. Active fire prevention programs, the use of aerial detection techniques, highly specialized equipment development and use, and progressive ideas have brought recognition to Michigan as a leader in the protection of its natural resources. Prescribed burning is readily employed to reduce fire risk, as well as improve silvicultural and wildlife habitat objectives. Forest health protection is an integral part of resource protection. Insect and disease outbreaks, as well as other stresses such as climate and air pollution, are detected through ground and aerial surveys. Biological and socio-economic factors are evaluated: then silvicultural, biological, and chemical management alternatives are considered; and finally the most appropriate alleviatory methods are implemented. Federal funds are provided through the USDA Forest Service for State Fire Protection, Volunteer Fire Programs, and detection surveys and suppression of insect and disease outbreaks.

F. Urban and Community Forestry

The USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program supports State efforts to enhance cities and towns through planning and managing urban forest resources in a manner that promotes their environmental, cultural, and biological health. This is done through a statewide Urban and Community Forestry Council, along with a financial grants program for projects and infrastructure development. For example, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, with Detroit Edison Energy Company, continues to plant trees in both urban and rural settings through The Greening of Detroit program. In the last five years, nearly \$300,000 has been provided for urban tree planting in southeast Michigan.

G. Conservation Reserve Program

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) offers landowners incentives to conserve soil, water, and wildlife habitat. Landowners can apply to enroll highly erodible land and other environmentally sensitive areas in the CRP. By enrolling land, a landowner can receive annual rental payments and cost-share benefits to implement conservation practices. Permanent vegetation which may include trees, grasses, or wildlife foods must be maintained for the contract period.

H. Wetlands Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is designed to help eligible landowners restore wetlands. Under this program, landowners enter into easements in exchange for a portion of restoration costs. The landowner maintains full control over access and use of WRP easements. Acceptable uses of WRP land may include activities such as hunting, fishing and other compatible uses. The primary objective is to restore altered wetlands as closely as possible to the natural hydrology, native vegetation, and natural topography, protecting the functions and values of wetlands in a farming context.

I. Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) was established in the 1996 Farm Bill and is administered by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. Its purpose is making technical and financial assistance available to landowners to develop, enhance, and restore upland wildlife, wetland wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fish, and other types of wildlife habitat. In the 2002 Farm Bill, additional funds were added and the program, in Michigan, is evolving to allow more of a focus on improving existing habitat, with an emphasis on rare natural communities and habitat for sensitive species.

J. Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is designed to identify conservation concerns and set conservation priorities to address soil erosion, water quality, wildlife habitat, and other resource issues through a community-based process.

K. Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, created in the State Constitution, provides a constitutionally dedicated fund for the acquisition of land and rights in land to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities, protect environmentally sensitive lands and preserve scenic places in Michigan. The State of Michigan and local units of government are eligible for grants from the Trust Fund. For local units, a 25% match is required. The fund also provides assistance to local units for recreational development projects.

L. National Forests in Michigan

The three National Forests in Michigan are: The Huron-Manistee (formerly two separate forests now managed jointly); the Ottawa, and the Hiawatha. Together, they comprise almost 2.8 million acres. Each forest will be revising their Forest Plans within the next three years. Overall, the volume of timber extracted from Michigan's National Forests has declined dramatically since 1989, from 12 billion to 3 billion board feet per year (Moore and Rockwell 2001).

- The Huron-Manistee National Forest comprises almost one million acres of public lands extending across the northern lower peninsula of Michigan. The Huron-Manistee National Forest provides recreation opportunities for visitors, habitat for fish and wildlife, and resources for local industry. The Huron-Manistee boasts thousands of lakes and miles of sparkling rivers and streams. The nationally-known Pere Marquette and Au Sable Rivers offer quality canoeing and fishing. The forests of northern Michigan are rich in history. In the late 1800's, logging was at its peak and these forests were quickly cut and cleared. In 1909, the Huron National Forest was established and the Manistee National Forest was formed in 1938. In 1945, these two National Forests were administratively combined. Working hand in hand with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and other partners, the Forest Service has changed the "lands that nobody wanted" to healthy forests again. Great progress has been made in recovering these lands, but a great deal of work remains, much of which is being done through partnerships.
- The Ottawa National Forest contains almost one million acres, and is located in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan. It extends from the south shore of Lake Superior down to Wisconsin and the Nicolet National Forest. The area is rich in wildlife viewing opportunities; topography in the northern portion is the most dramatic, with breathtaking views of rolling hills dotted with lakes, rivers and spectacular waterfalls.
- The Hiawatha National Forest was named after Longfellow's poem, "The Song of Hiawatha", and is located in the central and eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The Forest encompasses approximately 880,000 acres (net), and receives over 1.5 million recreational visits per year. The Forest affords visitors access to white sand, scenic beaches and relatively undeveloped shorelines along three of America's Inland Seas--Lakes Superior, Michigan, and Huron. From scenic and historic lighthouses to Great Lakes islands, from spectacular shorelines to the Midwest's finest winter playland, the Hiawatha National Forest brings to life a myriad of fascinating and exciting natural, historical, and unique recreation opportunities.

M. State Forests of Michigan

Michigan has the largest State Forest system in the United States, totaling 3.9 million acres, or roughly 20% of the forested land in the State. State Forests are managed by the Forest, Mineral, and Fire Management Division (FMFM), in coordination with other divisions of the MDNR such as Wildlife and Fisheries. Michigan's State Forests are managed for forest products, wildlife, and recreation. In doing so, they must balance the needs of multiple users including the forest products industry and millions of hunters, fishers, hikers, mountain bikers, snowmobile riders, campers, birders, and other nature lovers. Currently, the MDNR is developing an Old Growth and Biodiversity Stewardship program whereby a portion of State forestlands will be identified and managed primarily for biodiversity objectives.

N. Land Trusts Active in Michigan

National, regional and local conservation organizations play a vital role in the protection of private lands in Michigan. These organizations will be important partners in the success of Forest Legacy in Michigan. Local land trusts, working in particular service areas, will play an especially important role. These local non-profit groups were created and are sustained in order to preserve and enrich the natural heritage of Michigan's countryside through direct land protection, using appropriate tools such as conservation easements, voluntary protection agreements, estate planning, donations, and bargain sales. Organized at local levels, these land trusts provide people and communities with choices of how rural and urban green spaces can be used. Michigan is fortunate to have more than 40 land trusts active in communities across the State.

Michigan's Local Land Trusts:

Cadillac Area Land Conservancy	Michigan Audubon Society
Central LK superior Land Conservancy	Michigan Karst Conservancy
Chikaming Open Lands	Michigan Nature Association
Chippewa Watershed Conservancy	Monroe County Land Conservancy
Detroit Audubon Society	Natural Areas Association
Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy	North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy
Grass River Natural Area, Inc.	North Woods Conservancy
Gratiot Lake Conservancy	Oakland Land Conservancy
Great Lakes Bioregional LC	Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Grosse Isle Nature & Land Conservancy	Raisin Valley Land Trust
Keweenaw Land Trust, Inc.	Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy
Land Conservancy of West Michigan	Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy
Leelanau Conservancy	Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy
Les Cheneaux Foundation	Walloon Lake Trust & Conservancy
Little Forks Conservancy	West Bloomfield Land Conservancy
Little Traverse Conservancy	Woldumar Nature Center

Livingston Land Conservancy Macomb Land Conservancy	Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve, Inc.
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