

2020 Forest Stewardship Plan Survey

Survey of Michigan landowners with a 2015 Forest Stewardship Plan



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Introduction

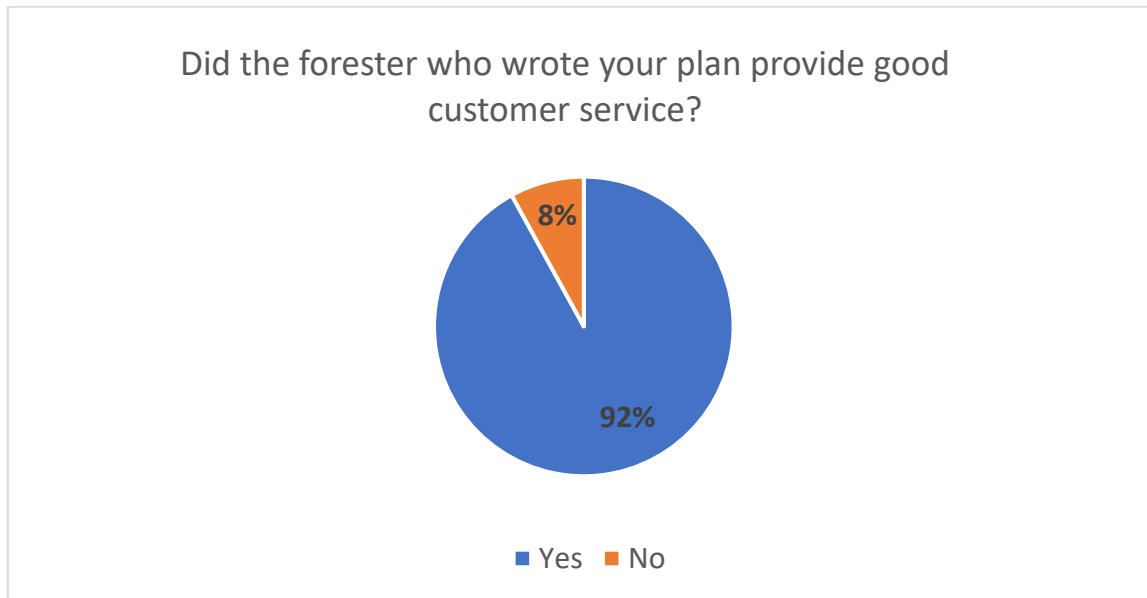
In September 2020, landowners with a 2015 Forest Stewardship Plan were surveyed to gauge the effectiveness and results of program participation. A total of 245 surveys were sent; 108 people responded for a 44% response rate; 21 envelopes were returned as non-deliverable.

Helpfulness of your Forest Stewardship Plan

Customer service

Question 1.

Most landowners surveyed thought that the forester who wrote their plan provided good customer service, at 92%. Some comments were, “very helpful,” and “knowledgeable and professional.”



Question 2.

When asked, “Did you understand everything in the plan?” 93% of respondents chose “yes.” Some commented that the plan was clearly written, and that the information in the plan was “a lot to learn for the first time.”

Question 3.

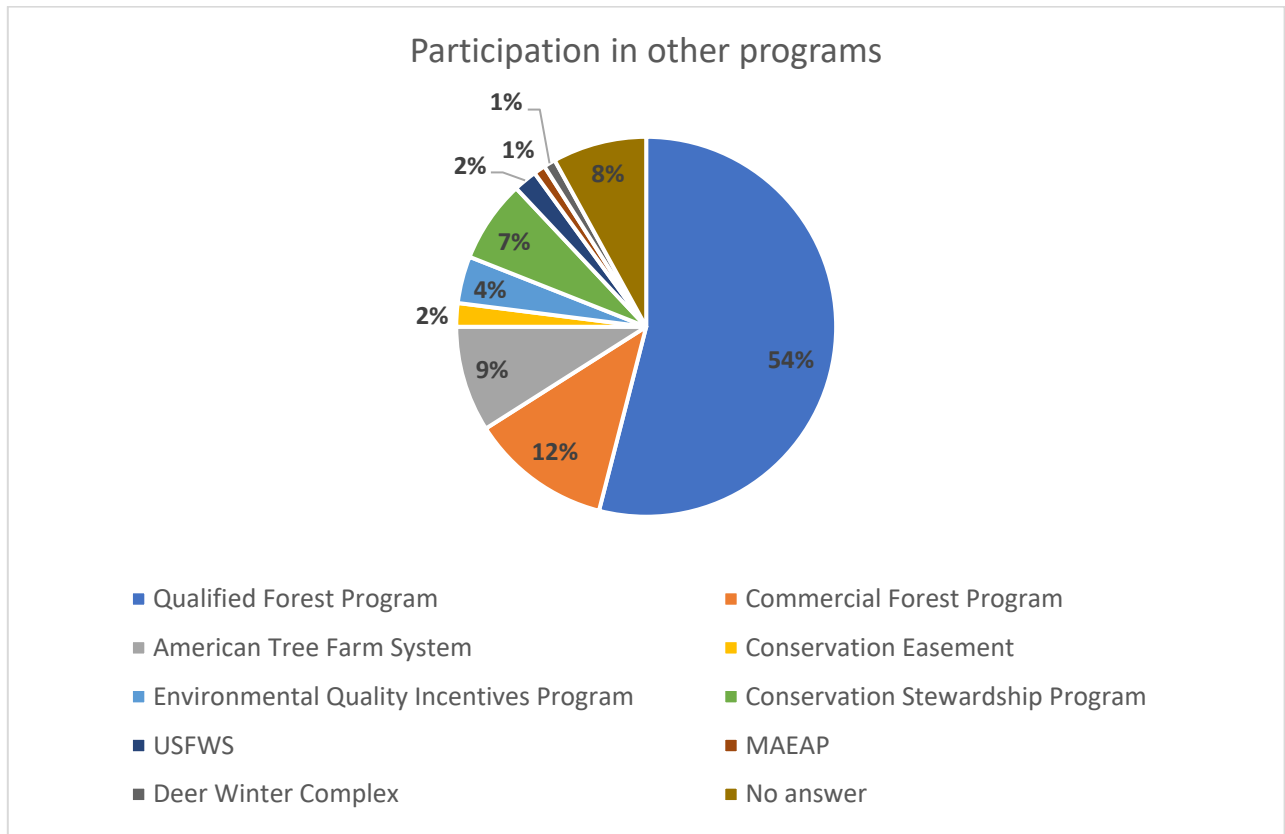
81% of respondents chose to share their plan with someone else, most commonly a family member, neighbor or logger.

- Spouse - 49%
- Children - 32%
- Neighbor - 21%
- Friend - 32%
- Logger - 20%
- Brother - 6%
- Other - 13%

Other related programs

Question 4.

71% of respondents planned to use their Forest Stewardship Plan to participate in another program. The Qualified Forest Program, Commercial Forest Program, and American Tree Farm System were most commonly chosen.



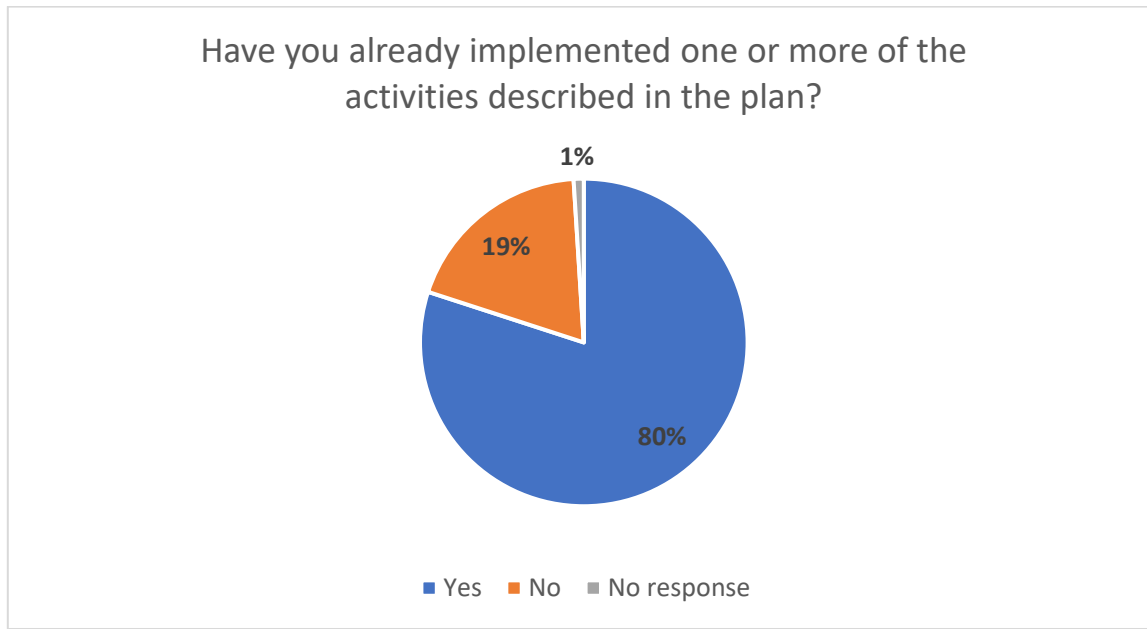
Implementation of Forest Stewardship Plans

Question 5.

When asked if they had already implemented one or more plan activities, 80% of landowners said that they had and 19% had not. Of those that hadn't, 14% planned to in the next five years.

Landowners implemented activities in areas including:

- Timber sales – 55%
- Plant trees – 15%
- Wildlife habitat – 13%
- Forest health and invasive species – 7%
- Other – 7%



Question 6.

When asked, “Do you intend to implement any activities in you plan in the next five years?” 78% of those surveyed said yes, and 19% said no. Timber sales, tree planting and wildlife habitat improvements topped the types of projects they wanted to get done.

Desired activities included:

- Timber sales – 44%
- Plant trees – 16%
- Wildlife habitat – 11%
- Forest health and invasive species – 4
- Other – 4%

Question 7.

When asked, “Has your plan helped you achieve your goals to improve your woods?” 88% of respondents said yes and just 6% said no. Some commented “hunting is awesome now” and “looking good,” but others noted that the process to make landscape changes is gradual and results are not immediate.

Question 8.

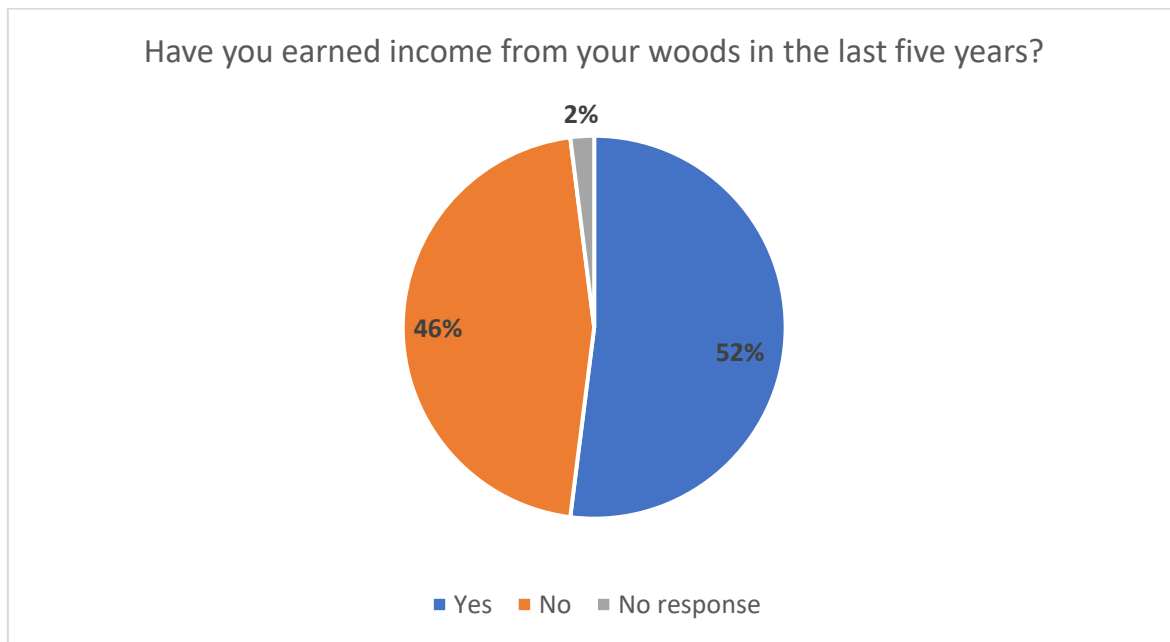
Landowners were asked, “did the forester who wrote your plan return to help you implement any activity?” Results were 50-50, (49% yes, 49% no, 2% no response) with some respondents noting that they enjoyed doing the work themselves or had changed foresters.

Effectiveness of Forest Stewardship Plans

Income from Forest Stewardship Plans

Question 9.

More than half of surveyed respondents, said they had earned income from their woods in the last five years.



Of those who had made income from their forest:

- 50% sold logs
- 9% sold firewood
- 2% sold hunting leases
- 3% sold pulpwood

Landowners were asked, “How much gross income has your woods produced in last five years?”

- The average forest income of those surveyed was \$22,755. However, three large sales over \$100,000 affected this average.
- The median amount earned was \$12,632.

Number of acres that were part of any timber sales in the last 5 years:

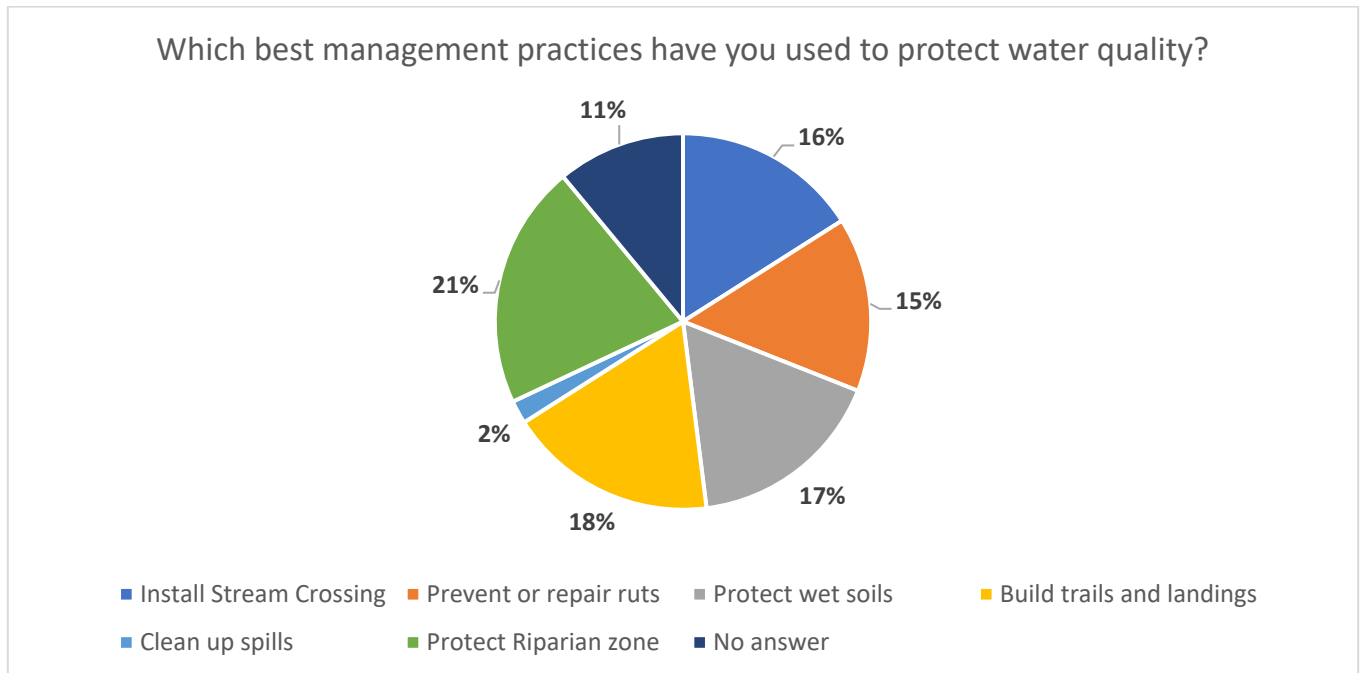
- Mean of responses is 69 acres
- Median of responses is 50 acres

Environmental benefits

Question 10.

Nearly two-thirds, of those surveyed indicated that they had a lake, river or pond on their property, and a third said they did not.

Of those who had water features, 44% had started using at least one Best Management Practice to improve water quality. These activities included installation of stream crossings, preventing and repairing ruts, protecting soils, building trails and cleaning up spills.



Question 11.

74% of respondents answered “yes” when asked if they had used their plan to create or improve wildlife habitat.

Of those who had:

- 67% made improvements for deer.
- 48% made improvements for game birds.
- 10% made improvements for songbirds.
- 11% made improvements for rabbits.
- 20% made improvements for other species.
- 3% specifically made improvements for threatened or endangered species.

Question 12.

About one in five of those surveyed used their plan to reduce the risk of wildfire. Those that did created fire breaks, or spaces without trees, that reduce the potential for flames to spread, and cut jack pines, a highly flammable type of conifer tree.

Demographic Information of Respondents

Question 13.

Landowners were asked their property locations. Those who responded to this survey represented 48 of Michigan’s 83 counties, in both the Upper and Lower peninsulas.

Question 14.

The survey asked forest owners “How many acres of woods do you own?”

- The mean is 268 acres (skewed by 4 parcels >1,000 acres).

- The median is 102 acres.
- The mode, or most common parcel size, was 80 acres.

Other information

Question 15.

When asked, “Is there anything else you would like to share?” some landowners noted that the plan implementation resulted in habitat improvements, children were learning and that family members were involved in the process. Challenges included difficulties in finding loggers to conduct small sales, wet weather and that it is hard to sell Scotch pine.

Question 16.

When asked if they would like a follow-up visit with the forester who wrote their plan, 21% said yes and 69% said no. Some commented that it was not necessary, that they would reach out when advice was needed or that they were already in regular contact.