

A Forest Stewardship Story About Recreational Property



The Brubaker's forest getaway in the Upper Peninsula.

Dennis and Vicky Brubaker purchased 527 acres of forest land in the eastern Upper Peninsula in 2013. The Brubakers own a small business in Midland, and they bought their property as a place to get away from the city and spend time outside. They enjoy watching songbirds, hunting for deer and grouse, and playing weekend farmer on their land up north. Their property was previously owned by a hunting camp that dates back to 1938.

Dennis has been watching nature for many years, and closely observing what happens. About 30 acres of aspen on his parent's property in Gladwin County were leveled by straight line winds in 1991. Even though it took Dennis and his father a long time to clean up the huge mess, Dennis noticed that the grouse and deer habitat were much better after Mother Nature disturbed their forest. So he sees the value in using forest management to mimic natural disturbances to maintain wildlife habitat and improve the timber in the forest. Fortunately for him, one of his new neighbors in the UP is Jerry Grossman, owner of Grossman Forestry Company in Newberry.

Dennis and Vicky hired Jerry and his team of consulting foresters shortly after buying their property to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan. Jerry recommended a Forest Stewardship Plan to the Brubakers because it is a simple yet comprehensive plan, and the DNR also offers a partial cost share to lower their total cost. Dennis reports, "We really enjoy the Forest Stewardship Program because we feel good managing our forest and showing other people about the benefits of harvesting timber." The Brubakers have peace of mind knowing that their foresters at Grossman Forestry are watching out for them, their land, and have a plan to help them accomplish their goals. Dennis says, "Jerry and his staff are helping us manage our forest, but they have also become our friends. Jerry showed us how he has managed his own forest next door, and we also go hunting and fishing together."

After their Forest Stewardship Plan was developed, Jerry Grossman enrolled the Brubakers into the Grossman Tree Farm Group to certify their sustainable forest management. He also helped them to enroll in the Qualified Forest program to significantly lower their property taxes. The Brubakers are planting trees, maintaining food plots, and harvesting timber according to their plan. Dennis reports, "We feel good giving back to nature, and maintaining the history of our forest. The previous owner cried when he had to sell his beloved property to us, and we want to manage it well for our sons Evan and Wesley to enjoy and take over some day."

In 2014, the Michigan Forest Stewardship Program helped 265 landowners like Dennis and Vicky Brubaker develop Forest Stewardship Plans covering almost 57,000 acres around the state. Call the DNR Forest Stewardship Coordinator at 517-284-5884 or explore www.michigan.gov/foreststewardship to find a professional forester or wildlife biologist near you who can help you manage, protect and *enjoy* your forest.