



## FOREST STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

### HELPING PRIVATE FOREST LANDOWNERS DEVELOP PLANS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THEIR FOREST

*Required under the Forestry Title of the 1990 Federal Farm Bill for retaining plan writer certification.*

## A LANDOWNER'S GUIDE

### INTRODUCTION

Michigan is home to almost 19 million acres of forest land, of which almost 65 percent is privately owned. The 8.4 million acres of non-industrial privately-owned forestland in Michigan provides diverse benefits to landowners, local communities, and the larger landscape. Forestland owners are as varied as the land they hold, including people such as residential landowners, farmers, hunting clubs, and people who own land for recreational purposes like hunting, hiking, and snowmobiling.

Actively managed forests provide timber products; other products like nuts, mushrooms and medicines; wildlife habitat; reservoirs of habitat for rare or endangered species; cleaner air through carbon sequestration; cleaner water and flood control; incredible scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, and many other benefits for landowners and society. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Forest Stewardship is the act of caring for a forest so it sustains health, vigor, and ecosystem function for the future.

The Forest Stewardship Program provides financial and technical assistance on Michigan's non-industrial private forestlands. By providing cost share funds for land management planning, sound management practices are promoted that consider elements important to forest health and vigor: soil, water, wildlife, timber, wetland, other resources, and resource values. Once a stewardship management plan is prepared, the landowner may then qualify for assistance in management implementation through other cost share programs (for more information visit [www.michigan.gov/foreststewardship](http://www.michigan.gov/foreststewardship)). **Forest Stewardship plans help create informed landowners become more engaged in planning and managing their forests.** This greatly increases the likelihood their forests will remain intact, productive and healthy, and the social, economic, and environmental benefits of these lands will be sustained for future generations.

Participation in the Forest Stewardship Program is open to any non-industrial private forest landowners who are committed to the active management and stewardship of their forested properties for at least ten (10) years. The program provides landowners with the professional planning and technical assistance they need to keep their land in a productive and healthy condition. To enter the program, landowners will select a private resource consultant from the list of Certified Stewardship Plan Writers maintained by the State. In partnership, the landowner and the consultant will identify the management objectives for the property. For some landowners, enhancing wildlife habitat for a particular species may be the most important objective; others may wish to manage their land for some type of recreation or for timber outputs. All are valid objectives under the Forest Stewardship Management Plan.

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

**TYPE OF PROGRAM:** The Stewardship Program is a cost-share program that pays a portion of the total costs of creating a forest management plan to a Michigan Certified Plan Writer. The landowner pays the remainder of the cost. We hope this investment will encourage the landowner to engage with the contractor, implement the plan, and maintain healthy forested conditions into the future.

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**FINANCIAL INCENTIVE:** The Stewardship Program helps private landowners offset the initial costs of developing a management plan for their forested property. The landowner selects and hires a private consultant forester to aid them in developing management goals and objectives, evaluate the property, and prepare a Forest Stewardship Plan. Landowners in the program pay approximately 50 percent of the cost of the plan development, or up to a cap. The remaining 50 percent of the costs will be paid by the State directly to the contractor.

**ELIGIBILITY:** The property must be a minimum of twelve (12) contiguous acres with five (5) currently wooded.

**PROCESS:** Once a landowner has decided to have a plan written, the landowner selects a certified plan writer from the list maintained by DNR. This list contains private consultant foresters who can assist with the development of a Forest Stewardship Plan. This information is searchable by county on the DNR website ([www.michigan.gov/foreststewardship](http://www.michigan.gov/foreststewardship)). In order to qualify for cost-share funds, the consultant selected must be certified as a Stewardship Plan Writer.

The landowner and plan writer agree to a cost for the plan. The cost of the plan will vary depending on several factors including acreage, site, number of stands, etc. The total cost of the plan is negotiated between the plan writer and the landowner. Solicitation of multiple bids is encouraged. Landowners are not required to select the lowest bid.

There is, however, a set fee that may be reimbursed for an eligible and approved plan under the Forest Stewardship Program. The formula is: \$300 base, plus \$1.25 per acre (maximum \$2,000) **OR** 50 percent of the cost of the plan, whichever is less.

The landowner must pay at least 50% of the total plan cost.

For example, on a 40-acre parcel, the cost share reimbursement varies depending on the total cost and the formula, the box below outlines three hypothetical bids:

40 acre property	Cost A	Cost B	Cost C
Total Plan Cost	\$300	\$700	\$1000
FS program pays	\$150	\$350	\$350
<b>Landowner pays:</b>	<b>\$150</b>	<b>\$350</b>	<b>\$650</b>

The cost share funds are paid directly to the Stewardship Plan Writer after the plan completed and accepted by the landowner, and approved by DNR.

### PROCESS FOR HAVING A FOREST STEWARDSHIP PLAN WRITTEN:

1. Landowner selects a Consultant forester and they enter into a written agreement.
2. Together the landowner and consultant forester complete the Forest Stewardship Assessment Form (PR4061), and Stewardship Plan Eligibility Application and Invoice (PR4065-3).
3. Consultant forester submits the application to DNR Service Forester for project eligibility approval.
4. Consultant forester writes plan. The plan must include all information required by DNR.
5. Landowner signs and accepts plan.
6. Landowner pays consultant forester (minimum of 50% of plan costs).

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7. Consultant forester submits plan to DNR Service Forester for review and approval.
8. DNR Service Forester reviews, approves or disapproves (note: plans will not be approved for payment if there are outstanding omissions of required components).
  - If approved, DNR Service Forester forwards to the Stewardship Coordinator for reimbursement to consultant forester.
  - If the plan not approved, the consultant and the landowner are advised so corrections can be made to qualify the plan.
9. Consultant forester is reimbursed in accordance with guidelines.

Once the plan is completed, the landowner should use the recommendations in the plan as a guide to implementing proper forest practices. Landowners should be aware that:

- The landowner decides which recommendations to follow. Plan implementation is completely voluntary.
- When implementing practices, the landowner is not required to hire or use the person who wrote the plan. Some plan writers provide a full range of consulting services, and others do not. The decision of which provider to use, what services to purchase and at what cost, is strictly up to the landowner. If you need additional information, contact the DNR Service Forester in your area.

**QUESTIONS?** Please contact the DNR, Forest Resources Division Staff below.

### SERVICE FORESTERS:

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### STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR:

Vacant, Lansing (Statewide), 517-335-3355.

The Forest Stewardship Program is administered by the DNR, Forest Resources Division and funded by the USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry, under Part 501 of 1994 PA 451 and the US Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, CFDA 10.664. A Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee meets quarterly to advise the DNR regarding program priorities for funding received.

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HUMAN RESOURCES  
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
PO BOX 30028  
LANSING MI 48909-7528

Or → MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS  
STATE OF MICHIGAN PLAZA BUILDING  
1200 6TH STREET  
DETROIT MI 48226

Or → OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS  
US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
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For further information or assistance on this publication, please contact the DNR,  
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