

NON-INDUSTRIAL PRIVATE FORESTS

A POSITION STATEMENT OF THE MICHIGAN SAF

The Michigan Society of American Foresters supports policies that encourage sustained investments in forest management and forest protection. Private lands are a valuable, renewable resource which provide a substantial timber supply, recreational opportunities, and wildlife and fish habitat. They also represent over 54% of Michigan's total forest landscape.

Over 384,000 non-industrial private owners control 10 million acres of Michigan's forest resource. These owners often know little about their forestlands, are not aware of forest management opportunities for multiple uses, and do not understand forest products markets and marketing. Management decisions on forestlands are often long lasting and, occasionally, irreversible. Since only 10 to 20 percent of forest landowners utilize professional assistance, it is clear that current programs reach few landowners.

There are opportunities, however, to improve landowner choices. Current programs providing assistance, education, or financial incentives are administered by various public and private entities include:

- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- USDA Forest Service
- Michigan State University Extension
- State Forest Stewardship Committee
- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- Michigan Department of Agriculture
- Universities
- Forest Products Companies
- Consulting Foresters
- Western Upper Peninsula Forest Improvement District
- Michigan Tree Farm Committee
- Michigan Association of Conservation Districts
- Resource Conservation & Development Districts
- Michigan Association of Consulting Foresters
- Michigan Sustainable Forest Initiative® State Implementation Committee
- Michigan Forest Resource Alliance
- Michigan Society of American Foresters
- Other Private Conservation Organizations

Recommendation:

The many sources of assistance mean many opportunities to reach non-industrial private forests, it also means a responsibility to coordinate efforts to achieve maximum benefits and minimize conflicts. Roles need to be clearly defined and channels of dialogue kept open.

All programs need to recognize several concepts:

- Private landowners have diverse goals that may change over time. All landowners, however, regardless of specific goals, will benefit when they have information on which to base decisions.
- Limited resources are available for these efforts. Coordination to maximize results and minimize conflicts is essential.
- The public sector's role should be to complement and encourage private forestry services in Michigan without conflicting with or impeding private forestry services.

The following assistance is important for successful management of non-industrial private forests:

- Information and education to help landowners understand and appreciate their forests, and to recognize opportunities for forest management and protection and forest product marketing.
- Technical assistance to help them develop forest management plans and practices.
- Labor to carry out forest management practices.
- Financial and tax incentives.
- Good markets for forest products.

Therefore, the Michigan Society of American Foresters recommends the revision and reinstatement of the notable past effort, ***Forestry Assistance for Landowners and the Public in Michigan - An Agreement among Providers of the Assistance - 1989***.

A position adopted by the Executive Committee of the Michigan Society of American Foresters on March 20, 2002, and which will expire after five years unless revised, extended, or withdrawn .

The Michigan Society of American Foresters is the scientific and educational association of professional foresters, including consultants, researchers, professors, students, and employees of public agencies and private firms. The Mission of SAF is to advance the science, technology, education, and practice of professional forestry to benefit current and future generations.