

Great Lakes Forests

Building Community Among Citizens and Professionals Connected to the Forest Resource

Serving Michigan, Minnesota, Ontario and Wisconsin

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Private Forest Lands

From a Regional Perspective

Private woodlands have long played an important role in the supply of forest products and environmental benefits throughout the region. The woodlands were originally considered by European settlers to be obstacles to the more important goals of human settlement and agriculture. As recently as the first quarter of this century, for example, forest land grants were given to returning war veterans in northern Ontario. Private ownership did not always lead to sound management. Add to that the uncertainty about harvest on public lands and the increasing demand for growth and it is clear why significant attention has been drawn to private lands in this region.

Michigan has over 19 million acres of forest land as well as greenways in urban and suburban areas and over 75% of the state forest land falls under private ownership. Over 60% of timber resources and hunting experiences occur on private lands. Similarly, the majority of Michigan's lakes, streams, and rivers are adjacent to private lands. In the next 15 years, it is estimated Michigan's population will increase 11% yet this increase will expand to utilize 83% more land area. Urban sprawl is projected to impact all of southern Michigan and numerous key areas in northern Lower Michigan and the Upper Peninsula as the aging population retires to the "North Country."

Minnesota points to studies which have shown a strong correlation between having a forest plan and protection and judicious use of the land. With that goal in mind, DNR staff have targeted that by 2005 they will develop forest management plans for at least 50% of the 5 million acres owned by non-industrial private landowners (NIPF) over 20 acres in size. Most recent estimates show over 15 million acres of forest land in the state of which 40% is owned by over 147,000 NIPF's.

Today, 15% or 6 million hectares of Ontario's forests are privately owned. These supply 20% of the annual provincial harvest and contribute \$657 (cont. p.2)

Forest Fragmentation:

A Resource Issue Paper

Great Lakes Forest Land: A Mosaic of Ownership Patterns and Use is based upon a forum conducted by the Alliance in October of 1997 and references a commitment across the region to increase the forest land base. A range of assumptions are based upon evident ecological, economic and social trends and their potential implications. There is evidence of rural migration and growth in second home/retirement residences placing greater demand for forest land and recreation. Any change in forest land use enhances habitation for some species and works against some species. Increase in development in forested lands may reduce access for timber harvesting and place greater demands for recreation. Potential implications of these trends range from reduced land tenure, decrease in parcel size to increased fire risk, decline or extinction of species, increased competition for timber, increased carrying demands on the forest/water for recreation and, linked, a demand for increased citizen input in land use decisions.

The paper describes regional vignettes and draws principles for forest land use planning and suggestions for education, research, monitoring and citizens' roles.

1. Enhance forest land parcel size and land tenure through tax changes and other concrete incentives.
2. Provide public education for the general public, public officials and professionals.
3. Expand urban forestry.
4. Increase forest patch size by promoting and rewarding volunteer efforts to manage forest lands across ownerships.
5. Provide effective forest landowner education.
6. Provide increased access to professional assistance for landowners (Cont. pg 2)

Inside:

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- * Private Sector Partners
- * Coming Events
- * Resources and Webs

Resources, continued

Portfolio: The Fields of St. Croix is featured in the Summer, 1998 issue of Land Development the journal of the National Association of Home Builders. The Robert Engstrom Companies developed the land 20 minutes from St. Paul on 226 acres with cluster development. More than 60% of the land is allocated to permanent open space. (NAHB, 1201 15th Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

Coming Events

Climate Change and Carbon Sequestration: A Forum for Government, Business & Citizens

Great Lakes Forest Alliance, Inc. October 19, 1999 Holiday Inn-Select, St. Paul MN 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Registration in Advance: \$30. Contact: Great Lakes Forest Alliance for a complete agenda at 715.634.2006 or e-mail: forestls@lsfa.org

Great Lakes Forests is published quarterly by the Great Lakes Forest Alliance which was chartered in 1987 by the governors of Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin and the Province of Ontario allied itself in 1997. The Alliance serves as a forum to foster and facilitate cooperative efforts that enhance management and sustainable use of public and private forest lands in the Upper Great Lakes. The trustees believe that through cooperation the states/province can achieve benefits for their citizens greater than if each jurisdiction worked alone. To that end, the Alliance promotes involvement of all those concerned with the region's forests to improve cooperation and coordination in forest policy and programs. Copy or Letters to the Editor for Great Lakes Forests is due 15 days before the end of the quarter: March 15, June 15, September 15 and December 15 of each year. The newsletter is mailed free of charge to any resident or agency in the four jurisdictions. Other subscriptions are \$16 per year. E-mail postings anywhere in the world are free of charge. To obtain a subscription, send name, affiliation, address, city, state, zip/postal code, phone, fax and e-mail address to the Alliance office. Great Lakes Forest Alliance, Inc. Post Office Box 722, Street Address: 7231 N Rehor Road, Hayward, WI. 54843. USA. Telephone and FAX: 715.634.2006. E-mail: forestls@lsfa.org ©Great Lakes Forest Alliance, September, 1999. Printed on recycled paper.

Michigan Warren (Ed) Frayer, Thomas G. Ferguson, Peter Grieves, Daniel Keathley, Sam Sorensen, Gerald Thiede

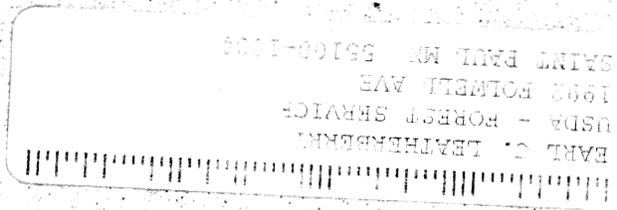
Minnesota Wayne Brandt, Richard Knoll, David Parent, Gerald A. Rose, Richard Skok, John Vogel

Ontario Bob Carman, Marc Dubé, Dave Euler, Martin Litchfield, Geoff Munro, Bill Thornton

Wisconsin Bridget Hagerty, Gene Francisco, Kenneth H. Maki, Thomas H. Schmidt, Fred J. Souba, Jr., Thomas Talbot

Canadian Forest Service Ed Kondo USDA Forest Service Linda R. Donoghue, Robert T. Jacobs, Michael Rains

Issue Theme: Private Forest Lands



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Beyond our Region. . .

A Forest "Bank" by TNC

The Nature Conservancy surpassed the ten million acre mark in 1998 for protection of natural habitat for a variety of plant and animal species. TNC credits this achievement in part to decisions based upon sound science and strong partnerships. However, they acknowledge that land acquisition at the scale practiced in the past by TNC will not suffice for the increasing pressures on private lands in the coming decades.

TNC believes forested land provides an ecological buffer surrounding and supporting threatened species and habitats and suggests threats to be fragmentation, erosion and unsound harvest practices. They perceive that as production in the national forests drops, areas like the lakes states will see the pressure on non-industrial private forests increase dramatically. The need for cash to meet estate, education or medical needs may force a landowner to liquidate his/her forests asset. TNC developed the Forest Bank concept as their response to awareness that 49% of timber harvested in the US comes from private lands.

Landowners will make a deposit or a transfer of the perpetual right to grow, manage and harvest trees to the Forest Bank while retaining simple ownership of the underlying land. In exchange, they receive an ironclad promise from TNC that the forest will remain forested, a modest financial return based upon the timber's value, and the option to withdraw the cash at the landowner's request.

TNC believes this will garner both timber available to be harvested and sound harvesting plans/practices. TNC will attempt to secure a few sites in the first 2 - 3 years and if successful, if TNC is able to meet economic and conservation objectives, a national scope will ensue. Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan are among the areas targeted for the pilot.

TNC envisions four potential business lines:

- * Small Landowner Deposits
- * "Anchor Tenant" acquisitions
- * Reforestation program (such as carbon sequestration credit markets) for marginal timberlands
- * Targeted product marketing using TNC brand.

From an e-mail from Kent Gilges, Forest Bank Director, The Nature Conservancy, at 716.232.3530 or e-mail: kgilges@tnc.org

Our Research Partners

North Central Research Station

Does the apparent proliferation of smaller-sized ownerships threaten the supply of timber? Using information collected from forest landowner surveys in Michigan and Wisconsin, researchers at the North Central Research Station have begun to explore the factors that influence forest ownership fragmentation and the timber supply.

NCRS has identified some factors. The form of ownership can impact the potential for fragmentation. In the Great Lakes Region (US side), individuals own nearly half of the forest, resulting in the greatest potential for fragmentation. The other half is publicly owned or held by forest industry, corporations/ partnerships, or native peoples and is typically held in larger tracts. The presence of those ownerships serves as a buffer against fragmentation.

Where the forest is located across the landscape influences its potential for fragmentation. The popularity of the northwoods for second homes has escalated forest ownership fragmentation. It tends to occur mostly along waterfronts or near developments such as golf courses or resorts. Forests tend to remain unfragmented by ownership on wet sites, farmsteads, and in remote locations. Those forests continue to produce timber.

There are many owner characteristics that influence fragmentation and timber supply. Forest owners in the Lake States tend to be older, most are over 50 years of age and nearly one-third are retirees. Many are of modest means. For example, in Michigan, 54% of the retirees owning forests have incomes of less than \$30,000. Half have either harvested timber or indicated they intend to harvest timber. The market for timber will dictate availability on smaller holdings in the future.

Changing demographics will influence fragmentation. The region's population is growing older. At the same time, the area of forest increased. Over the past 20 years, Lake States forests increased by 1.7 million acres. Much of the increase was previously pasture or fields. The conversion of agriculture lands to forests probably did not lead to a significant increase in new owners. However, over the long-term, the aging population will influence fragmentation as baby boomers retire and buy seasonal homes.

For more information or a copy of the published findings from the Michigan and Wisconsin landowner studies, contact Earl C. Leatherberry, North Central Research Station, 651.649.5138 or e-mail: eleather/nc@fs.fed.us.

