

The Michigan Forester

Number 79 Winter 2014

Charlie Becker

Michigan's 2013 Forester of the Year

Charlie Becker of Gladstone has been recognized by the Michigan's Society of American Foresters as "2013 Forester of the Year". Charlie was presented the award at the State SAF meeting in Traverse City. Charlie first joined SAF as a forestry student at Michigan Tech 32 years ago. He is recognized as an excellent Michigan forestry ambassador for all-around natural resource and sustainable forest management. Charlie has been an active SAF member throughout his career in the UP Chapter and State activities.

Charlie has worked in the forestry profession since 1986 after his graduation from Michigan Technological University where he attained a BS in Forest Management, and a Masters in Silviculture/Soils.

Charlie has spent his entire career in the Upper Peninsula working on the former Mead Paper, now Plum Creek properties. Over the years his various forest management roles at Mead Paper have included Research & Planting Operations Manager, East Area Forestry Manager, Technical Services Manager, and his current responsibility for Plum Creek as Senior Resource Manager. His current role includes overseeing all of Plum Creek Michigan's 580,000 acres, and 80,000 acres in Wisconsin while being responsible for more than 30 employees. He is also responsible for implementation of SFI, and Plum Creek's legislative activities in both Michigan and Wisconsin at the State and Federal level.

Over the years Charlie has willingly shared his knowledge with other large private landowners, the DNR, and the Forest Service. His activities as a professional forester and manager have also been a very important part in contributing to Michigan's forestry success in developing and maintaining a positive reputation with public and elected officials.

Charlie is a regular contributor of input to Michigan's Legislators on key natural resource bills. He is regularly called directly by the Senators and Representatives because of his reputation of being honest, balanced and an expert in the field of natural resources. Charlie routinely participates with the Congressman and Michigan legislators with the attitude of "what can I do to help you". (Cont'd on page 4)

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SAF Members Receive 2013 Awards

From left to right: Charlie Becker, Plum Creek, Forester of the Year; Ernie Houghton, DNR, 2013 Fellow; Bernie Hubbard, MSAF State Chair; Don Howlett, retired USFS Hiawatha, 2013 Fellow



Have something to contribute or would you like printed copy of the *Michigan Forester*? Please contact Tori Irving at irvingt@michigan.gov or at (906) 458-1210.

Michigan's Forestry Consultants

1 **Glen Tolksdorf, CF**
Tolksdorf Forestry
Calumet, MI
906-482-9366

2 **Dean Francis**
Upper Michigan Land
Management & Wild-
life Services, Inc.
Escanaba, MI
906-786-3488

3 **Gerald Grossman, CF**
Grossman Forestry Co.
Newberry, MI
906-293-8707

4 **Dean Reid, CF**
D&S Forestry
Services Co.
St. Ignace, MI
906-643-7515

5 **Jerry Lambert**
Forest Resource
Services
Frederic, MI
989-619-2882

6 **Richard Cooper**
Honor, MI
231-325-2175

7 **Paul Drysdale, CF**
Drysdale Forestry
and Consulting
Cadillac, MI
231-779-2989

8 **Scott Erickson**
MichiTree, Inc.
Manistee, MI
231-723-9946

9 **Doug Lee, CF**
Lee Forestry Services
Auburn, MI
989-662-0139

10 **Bill Rockwell, CF**
Plum Line & Metro
Forestry Consultants
St. Johns, MI
989-224-4600

11 **Robert A. Cool, CF**
Metropolitan Forestry
Consultants
Lansing, MI
517-349-0999

12 **Jeff Steinkraus, CF**
Steinkraus Forest
Management, LLC
Marcellus, MI
269-228-0139

13 **Justin Miller, CF**
Green Timber
Consulting Foresters, Inc.
Pelkie, MI
906-353-8584

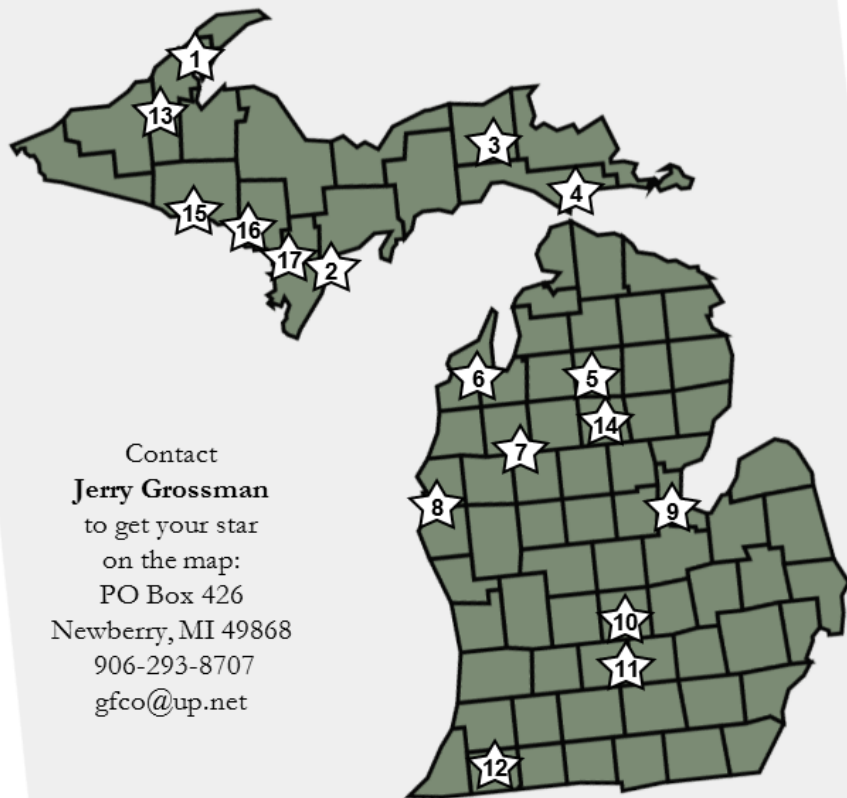
14 **Keith Martell, CF**
Martell Forestry, Inc.
Gaylord, MI
989-732-6774

15 **Brock VanOss**
VanOss Forestry
Services, LLS
Crystal Falls, MI
906-367-0777

16 **Bill Hasse**
Paladin Forestry
Iron Mountain, MI
906-396-5783

17 **Shawn Cannon**
Cannon Forestry
Resources, LLC
Bark River, MI
906-241-3141

The STARS of Michigan's Forests!



Contact
Jerry Grossman
to get your star
on the map:
PO Box 426
Newberry, MI 49868
906-293-8707
gfco@up.net

DNR's Forest Resources Division Completes and Shares its First Accomplishments Report

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) works hard to sustainably manage Michigan's state forest land to meet a variety of needs. To accomplish this, the DNR uses an ecosystem-based approach that meets current economic, recreational and environmental needs, while protecting those forests and ensuring they can meet the demands of future generations.

The DNR's Forest Resources Division (FRD) works on behalf of the people who rely on and enjoy Michigan's forests. To share its achievements, FRD has completed its first accomplishments report to highlight the work of its staff and many partners from across the DNR, private industry and local government.

The report, which covers fiscal year 2012, includes six sections:

Section 1: Michigan's state forests are cooperatively managed to benefit the economy by supporting the forest products industry, outdoor recreation opportunities and many other uses. This section highlights these achievements and their positive impact on the state.

Section 2: The DNR's nationally recognized wildfire program has, over the last five years, protected the public and saved natural resources, homes and businesses – including more than 2,100 structures. The robust and diverse Fire Program is the focus of this section.

Section 3: Private forest landowners account for roughly 12 million acres that provide public benefits like clear air and water, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation and a large portion of the state's wood supply. Accomplishments impacting private lands forestry are included in this section.

Section 4: Well-managed state forest land is critical to ensuring equitable access to hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, birding, ORV riding and other outdoor recreation and uses. This section explains the work FRD did to ensure state forest land is accessible to the public.

Section 5: Support staff is central to FRD's ability to meet its management goals and objectives. An overview of FRD's support staff is included in this section.

Section 6: This section discusses how FRD is funded.

Bill O'Neill, FRD chief, said he hopes people will look over the report to get a better idea of the diverse programs within the division.

"We hope folks will take some time to look over the content to learn more about the role of FRD and how its work impacts the places the citizens of Michigan live, work and play," said O'Neill, who also serves as state forester.

FRD is currently working on its report for fiscal year 2013.

The report, and other useful information about FRD and its work, can be found at www.michigan.gov/forestplan.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Firewise Workshop
February 25, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.
Marquette Township Firehall
Marquette, MI

MSU Agriculture and Natural Resources Week
March 1-8, 2014
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI

MSAF Spring Conference:
Forest Regeneration Topics
March 20-21, 2014
Escanaba, MI

Sustainable Forestry Conference
April 10, 2014
Florence, WI

Heating the Midwest:
Biomass Based Thermal Energy Use
April 29-May 1, 2014
Radisson Hotel and Conference Center
Green Bay, WI

NCASI Northern Regional Meeting
May 6-8, 2014
Wausau, WI

Michigan Forest Association Board Meeting
May 16, 2014

Michigan Forest Association Annual Meeting
August 15-16, 2014
Walloon Lake, MI

For more upcoming events, visit:
<http://michigansaf.org/Calendar/calendar.htm>

(Charlie Becker, Cont'd from page 1)

In 2012 as an example, Charlie organized U.P. forestry field tours for both Governor Snyder and Congressman Benishek. His involvement with elected officials over the years has resulted in several appointments to some important council and committee assignments such as the Michigan Timber Advisory Council, Michigan DNR Public Land Management Strategy Advisory Committee, and the Michigan Office of Regulatory Reinvention Natural Resources Advisory Rules Committee.



Charlie has been a member of many other groups and boards throughout his career because of his effectiveness in always providing valuable information and being a pro-active person. As an example, he is currently a Member of the Board of Directors for the Michigan Forest Products Council and the Michigan Tech School of Forestry and Environmental Science Advisory Board.

Throughout Charlie's 30 year career his expertise has been called upon to make presentations and organize field tours to explain good sustainable forestry, wildlife management, softwood regeneration practices and all around land management. A few recent examples include a SAF State meeting presentation on Lowland Forest Management, presentation to the Michigan United Conservation Club (MUCC) on the Michigan Forest Products Industry, the Michigan Loggers Conference on the Woody Biomass Industry, and to the Association of Consulting Foresters Annual Conference on Logging Technology Utilization and Practices in Michigan.

For more than 15 years Charlie has made annual silviculture field tours and presentations to both Michigan Tech and Purdue University students, with a passion of giving confidence to the students that there are excellent career opportunities out there and to reinforce the importance of getting good experience working summer jobs.

In his spare time Charlie participates in many volunteer activities within the Delta County community he lives in. A few of these include being a member of the Trustees for the Community Foundation for Delta County, and the President of his Church Council. Charlie has always been active in the Upper Peninsula in also volunteering his time especially where there are opportunities supporting youth. Char-

lie also leads the Plum Creek Foundation program in Michigan which as an example, in 2013 contributed more than \$100,000 to more than 30 non-profit organizations within the U.P.

Charlie and his wife Kathy are regular supporters of the Gladstone School District and other activities in the Delta County community by regularly volunteering and participating in behind the scenes activities and also supporting the extracurricular activities of their 3 children, Dan, Katie, and Bridget.

This presentation of Michigan's 2013 SAF Forester of the Year is made in appreciation for Charlie Becker's continuous efforts and support to the Society of American Foresters and to the forestry profession in Michigan.

Lakes States Fire Science Consortiums' Focus for 2013 through 2015

Since 2010, the Lake States Fire Science Consortium (LSFSC, <http://lakestatesfiresci.net>) has been working to ensure the best fire science is available to those who manage fire-dependent ecosystems of the Lake States region. As one of the original 8 regional consortia of the now 14 across the United States, the LSFSC's mission is to accelerate the awareness, understanding, and adoption of wildland fire science information by federal, tribal, state, local, and private stakeholders across the Lake States from Minnesota to New York, and the adjacent Canadian provinces of Ontario and Manitoba. The LSFSC aims to link managers, scientists, policymakers, and disciplines by providing information and tools to support management of the fire-dependent ecosystems in the Lake States region. The LSFSC's focus in 2013 through 2015 will revolve around three themes.

These include:

- Fire and invasive species in the Lake States region (fire effects on invasive species, invasive species modification of fire behavior, and spread of invasive species through fire operations).
- Increasing awareness and overcoming barriers of prescribed fire use (with an emphasis on the role of fire science in fire management and natural resource post-secondary curricula [e.g., forestry, wildlife science, environmental science, biology], and develop recommendations for undergraduate majors that should include fire science).
- Increasing information exchange pertaining to wildlife communities associated with fire-dependent ecosystems.

For information on the Lake States Fire Science Consortium, or to provide ideas or information for newsletters, webinars, field trips, or workshops, please contact us at lakestatesfiresci.net@gmail.com, or mcgowan-stinski.1@osu.edu.



MICHIGAN SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL SURVEYORS

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MUNSING FORESTRY FIRM AGREES TO SETTLEMENT WITH THE MICHIGAN SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL SURVEYORS

Lansing, Michigan – The Michigan Society of Professional Surveyors is pleased to announce that it settled a recent enforcement action, filed against a Northern Michigan forester who the Society believed was engaging in the unauthorized practice of surveying. The case, Michigan Society of Professional Surveyors vs. Veneberg Forestry, was filed in the Mackinac County Circuit Court in February 2013, following a landowner's discovery that a map drawn by the defendant purporting to show the property boundary lines was incorrect. The terms of the settlement included the entry of a permanent injunction, which requires that the defendant "cease and desist accepting jobs requiring him to establish or re-establish boundary lines in conjunction with a sale, conveyance, or transfer of real property." The defendant also agreed to reimburse the Society for a portion of its attorney fees incurred during the case.

"This injunction and the reimbursement of attorney's fees will make many foresters (and others) think long and hard about accepting this type of work under any circumstances," explained Society member Bill Karr, who was the Society's representative during settlement discussions. According to Mr. Karr, "This agreement is not an 'end all' but it is certainly a tool (a hammer if you will), that we can employ in other instances."

Surveyors are governed by the Michigan Occupational Code, which provides that conducting a survey requires a license and has strict penalties for non-compliance. The Society has spent the last several years investigating individuals and entities across the State of Michigan who are believed to be involved in unlicensed surveying. If you have a complaint about unlicensed surveying, please contact the Michigan Society of Professional Surveyors at (517) 484-2413.

**Meet Tara Bal,
U.P. Chapter SAF Vice-Chair**

**Meet Julie R. Crick,
Natural Resources Educator**

Hello! I would like to introduce myself as the new MSU Natural Resources Extension Educator located in Roscommon County. My predecessor in this position was Russ Kidd, a knowledgeable and well versed Professional. While Russ is a hard act to follow, I aim to do my best to also become a valued community and professional resource.

My trade background is forestry. Originally from Indiana, I attended Purdue University for both my Bachelor's in Forestry as well as my Masters of Science. While at Purdue, I helped teach forestry as well as plant identification classes and participated in data collection for a variety of projects. My research focused on conservation practices used in new housing developments, and my studies focused on collaboration and partnerships among natural resource agencies and organizations. Following the completion of my Master's Degree, I accepted a job with a non-profit in the Southern California Mountains to help with a landowner assistance program promoting defensible space, called "Forest Care". The program was a unique partnership between the non-profit and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), while funding came from the U.S. Forest Service.

Because I was hired on near the inception of the program, I had the opportunity to be involved in organizing the initial operations, developing community partnerships and collaborating with other agencies to increase the effectiveness of the program's accomplishments. In addition, while serving as Program Director for the last three and a half years, I was able to develop new partnerships with local agencies and organizations, including the American Red Cross and the County of San Bernardino Fire Hazard Abatement, to ensure residents at all socioeconomic levels had the opportunity to create defensible space on their property at little to no cost.

The grants supporting the Forest Care program expired at the end of 2013, and luckily my job search brought me to Roscommon, Michigan! Roscommon is a good spot for me as it caters to the canoe enthusiast as well as the cross country skier. Both activities are my top picks for recreation, along with gardening, exploring new trails with my dog, Coulter, and collecting rocks and minerals.

I am delighted to be an Extension Educator here in Roscommon, and look forward to working with landowners, communities, industry professionals and others to provide natural resource related information that will help sustain and improve our Michigan ecosystems.

My office is located in the Roscommon County Building (500 Lake Street, Roscommon, MI 48653). I can be reached at 989-275-7179 or at crickjul@msu.edu. Feel free to drop me a note to introduce yourself, or to let me know how I can help!



Currently I am the Coordinator of the Master of Forestry Program at Michigan Technological University in Houghton, MI. I've recently completed my PhD, studying the causes behind the recent sugar maple decline in the Upper Great Lakes region, including the impacts of nutrients, climate, pathology, management, and invasive earthworms. I have a B.S. in Forestry from Purdue (2004) and a Masters from Michigan Tech (2007), during which I created a silvicultural model for emerald ash borer management. Between degrees I have been a forest health field technician and a FIA Forester in Texas. I've taught and am teaching courses within the School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science at Michigan Tech, including Multiple Resource Assessment (measurements), Integrated Resource Practicum (capstone), Forest Health, and Insect Ecology. I also frequently provide field trips and give volunteer presentations the general public and K-12 classes on forestry related topics, with insects and forest health being the most popular. I live about 5 miles past the building that says "the last place on earth" in the Keweenaw Peninsula with my family and 2 dogs, Acer and Tsuga. I've been a member of SAF since 2002.



2013 SAF Election Results

State Chair: Georgia Peterson.
Thanks to Tricia St. Pierre for running!

UP Vice-Chair: Tara Bal.
Thanks to Celie Borndal for running!

Council V Rep: Gary Vander Wyst (WI)
Thanks to Don Howlett for running!

National Vice-President: Bob Alverts

MiSAF Members Receiving Membership Pins in 2012

Submitted by Craig Kasmer, Awards Chair

Every Spring Conference and Fall Conference, Membership Recognition Pins are handed out at the evening banquet. Please take a moment to see if your name is on the list of pin recipients for this year. If it is, be sure to attend one (or why not both?) of the conferences this year; if you recognize a friend/colleague/neighbor etc. that is on the list, please let them know that they are on the pin recipient list.

10 Year Pin 2012 Recipients

(Member Since 2002)

Mr. Benjamin J. Williams
Ms. Andrea L. Anulewicz
Mr. Kevin Beck
Mr. Christopher Bont
Mr. Kevin D. Byers
Ms. Tara Lee Eberhart
Mr. Thomas E. Jacques
Mr. Michael T. Jensen

Mr. Patrick Marolla
Ms. Sheila Madahbee
Dr. Dennis M. Merkel
Mr. Todd A. Penrose
Mr. Adam M. Petrelius
Mr. Pete W. Squibb
Mr. Eric G. Stoddard

20 Year Pin 2012 Recipients

(Member Since 1993)

Mr. Robert Gerald Burnham
Mr. Carl Ekdorn
Mr. Dominic E. Fucciolo
Mr. James Todd Green
Mr. John Mitchell Hamel
Mr. Kevin A. Haustein
Mr. Joseph John Kaiser
Mr. Kirk Dale Kass
Ms. Lauri K. LaBumbard
Mr. Frank J. Laurence
Mr. Daniel M. Racine

30 Year Pin 2012 Recipients

(Member Since 1983)

Mr. Jon M. Lamy
Mr. Douglas Alan Lee
Mr. Stephen Ralph Nelson
Ms. Jean E. Perkins
Mr. Jim A. Thompson
Mr. Russell P. Kidd
Mr. John R. Gwaltney
Ms. Phyllis A. Dorman-Green
Mr. Bill Cook

40 Year Pin 2012 Recipients

(Member Since 1973)

Mr. Stephen T. Kalisz
Dr. Donald F. Holecek
Mr. Dennis A. Good
Mr. Robert J. Cadorn

50 Year Pin 2012 Recipients

(Member Since 1963)

Mr. Robert A. Borak
Mr. Dan J. Bulmer
Mr. Marion G. True
Mr. Gerald A. Rose

60 Year Pin 2012 Recipients

(Member Since 1953)

Mr. John R. Hornick
Mr. Marlin R. Caris

Michigan SAF Education Fund - 2013 Budget

Prepared by Chad Fate (As of April 2013)

Beginning Balance	\$ 886.25
Income	
Raffle Tickets Spring/Fall	\$1,000.00
2013 PLT Teacher Sponsorship (Pass through from MI SAF Account)	\$ 650.00
Expenses	
MSU Scholarship	\$ 250.00
MTU Scholarship	\$ 250.00
PLT Teacher Sponsorship 2012	\$ 650.00
PLT Teacher Sponsorship 2013	\$ 650.00
National SAF Education Fund (2/3 raffle ticket sales)	\$ 660.00
Balance	\$ 76.25

Michigan Society of American Foresters

Year 2013 Budget Status Report

Revenue	Expected 2013 Revenue	Revenue Received as of December 31, 2013
Membership Dues	\$2,500.00	\$2,740.50
Interest	\$50.00	\$43.45
Spring Conference Proceeds	\$1,500.00	\$2,695.72
Fall Conference Proceeds	\$1,500.00	\$2,285.46
Michigan Forester Ads	\$1,000.00	\$825.00
PLT Honorarium	\$200.00	\$250.00
Total	\$6,750.00	\$8,840.13

Expenses	Budgeted for 2013	Funds Disbursed as of December 31, 2013
HSD Dues	\$250.00	\$262.77
Chapter Dues	\$500.00	\$381.00
Michigan Forester	\$300.00	\$323.49
Society Administration	\$250.00	\$250.76
State Chair		\$-
MI Forester Editor Honorarium	\$200.00	\$200.00
Education Fund Honorarium	\$200.00	\$200.00
Secretary Honorarium	\$200.00	\$200.00
Treasurer Honorarium	\$200.00	\$200.00
Students to Nat'l Meeting	\$500.00	\$-
National Meeting	\$1,500.00	\$1,467.38
Donation to Nat'l Raffle	\$100.00	\$-
Leadership Academy		\$-
Awards	\$100.00	\$279.68
PLT Honorarium	\$200.00	\$250.00
Web Hosting	\$-	\$-
Greenbook Printing	\$2,860.00	\$2,657.00
MSU Research Symposium	\$-	\$-
MSU Conclave	\$500.00	\$500.00
UP Autotour	\$600.00	\$-
Education Fund +/-	\$650.00	\$-
Conference Sponsorship	\$-	\$500.00
Misc	\$500.00	\$76.00
Total	\$9,610.00	\$7,748.08

Total Michigan SAF cash as of: December 31, 2013 \$10,167.26

Michigan Society of American Foresters has cash assets only.

Prepared by: Lee Mueller, Treasurer

A group of about ten people, including men and women, are gathered in a forest. They are dressed in outdoor or work attire, such as jackets, hats, and boots. The forest has tall, thin trees with some autumn-colored leaves. The ground is covered with fallen leaves. The overall scene suggests a field activity or a meeting related to forestry.

Michigan Forestry Assistance Program

Michigan's Forestry Assistance Program (FAP) is now over one year old. This program, which operates through Conservation Districts, was started by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) with help from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Department of Natural Resources. The program's goal is to encourage private, non-industrial forest landowners to become stewards of their forests. It began with 13 foresters covering 31 counties across Michigan. Now, with support from recent legislation, it has expanded to 17 foresters covering 42 counties.

How does the FAP help forest landowners? According to A.J. Campbell, FAP forester for Dickinson and Menominee Counties, "It provides them with the information they need to start managing their forests. Many landowners are interested in improving wildlife habitat, harvesting timber, or addressing forest health issues, but they often don't know where to begin. We try to be that starting point." The process typically begins with a free site visit, where the forester walks the property with the landowner, making observations and answering questions. After the initial visit, the forester follows through to make sure the landowner gets the help they need. As of September 30th, FAP foresters had visited over 1,200 people who own nearly 129,000 acres, but they are just getting started. Over 60 percent of Michigan's forests are privately owned, and managing these lands contributes significantly to the state's economy. A study conducted by the National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO) found that Michigan's 12,360,359 acres of privately owned forested acres contribute significantly to the national total by supporting 63,445 jobs, greater than \$2 billion in payroll, and more than \$7 billion in annual sales.

Two major objectives of the program are to drive Michigan's economy by referring landowners to professionals in the private sector and to support government programs that provide technical and financial assistance to landowners, and, according to the most recent data, FAP works. More than 400 landowners have been referred to private sector foresters for forest management plans, and 193 of them were referred for timber harvests. "What's interesting now," according to A.J., "is that private industry foresters are starting to refer landowners back to us to find out about government programs. This is a recent development, and it lets us know that private foresters want to work with us and appreciate what we're doing for them and their customers."

The latest development in the FAP is its role in Michigan's Qualified Forest Program (QFP). This program, which is administered by MDARD, offers a generous tax incentive to forest landowners who acquire and agree to follow an approved forest management plan. Unlike the Commercial Forest Program, landowners enrolled in the QFP are allowed to have permanent structures on their parcels, and they do not have to allow the public on their lands for fishing and hunting. If you are interested in the QFP, FAP foresters can teach you about the program, determine if your parcels qualify, and help you find a qualified forester to prepare a forest management plan.

If you are landowner or a forestry professional interested in FAP, please visit the following website www.michigan.gov/mifap or call (517) 284-5607 to locate your county's forester.

A Position Statement of the Michigan Society of American Foresters



FIRE MANAGEMENT

Position:

The Michigan Society of American Foresters (SAF) supports stable and adequate funding dedicated to wildfire suppression. Programs that educate landowners and local governments of the danger of wildfire and methods for minimizing risk are also needed.

Michigan SAF supports the use of prescribed fire under proper weather and fuel conditions to achieve clearly defined land management objectives. Prescribed fires and modified fire suppression techniques must be conducted under conditions that minimize the potential health hazards, effects of smoke, and risks of escape.

Background & Issues:

Fire is a natural element of many ecosystems in Michigan, including forests, savannas, and prairies. These ecosystems have evolved with fire, and fire plays an essential role sustaining their viability and vigor. Land managers use prescribed fire to restore fire-adapted ecosystems and reduce fuels, but unplanned or uncontrolled fires—wildfires—can be destructive to ecosystems, to property, and to human life. Fire management comprises the appropriate use of prescribed fire as well as the prevention and suppression of wildfires.

Michigan's fire history has taken some extreme turns. During the millennia preceding the major Euro-American settlement that began in the early 1800s, fires were a common occurrence in Michigan ecosystems, with Native People effectively using fire as a land management tool. During the period of forest exploitation that began in the mid-1800s, wildfires of catastrophic proportions—the effects of which can still be seen—burned back and forth across the Michigan landscape. By the 1920s little forest was left to burn. Eventually, fire prevention and suppression efforts improved so that fire was effectively excluded. The last decades of the 20th century witnessed a growing recognition by ecologists and foresters that fire was a natural part of ecosystems and prescribed fires were needed to reintroduce this disturbance agent.

Nationwide and in Michigan, the risk of catastrophic wildfires is high. Conifer forests—those dominated by species like pine, spruce and fir—are at highest risk. Many of these forests have matured without the low-intensity maintenance fires that historically occurred, resulting in dense stands containing large fuel loads. Fires that ignite in such forests can quickly become conflagrations that are difficult and expensive to suppress. It is likely that climate changes will only accentuate this problem.

Another concern is the rise in permanent or recreational homes in or near fire-prone ecosystems. The increasing rural population increases the probability that a wildfire will be ignited, as over 90% of Michigan wildfires are human-caused. People in forests also greatly complicate fire-fighting strategies as saving lives and structures becomes the highest priority.

Issue: The “wildland-urban interface” refers to areas where human communities and natural communities abut; the “wildland-urban intermix” occurs where human and wild communities intermingle (both abbreviated WUI). The interface and intermix present unique challenges for fire managers in areas where the wild community is fire prone. Forests dominated by red and jack pines that occur in northern Michigan are at particular risk (Haight et al. 2004). Professional foresters can help to educate people living in high-risk WUI areas on the danger of wildfire, as well as on landscaping and building materials and designs that can mitigate fire danger. Local governments also need to be advised of potential wildfire risks when crafting zoning ordinances and building and insurance codes. The national Firewise program (<http://www.firewise.org>) and Michigan State University Extension (<http://bookstore.msue.msu.edu>) produce excellent materials and programs for educating people about wildfire risks and mitigation.

Issue: During the last few decades, the accumulation of fuel to dangerous levels has occurred in many conifer forests, due principally to exclusion of the low-to moderate-intensity fires that once burned through them. Recent research has shown that these fire-prone Michigan ecosystems still burn more frequently than hardwood-dominated, fire-resistant ecosystems, but the frequency of fire is much lower than in pre-Euroamerican settlement times (Cleland et al. 2004). Thinning dense stands may be necessary before prescribed fire can be employed to maintain safe fuel levels. Forest managers need to be actively engaged in assessing fuel levels and implementing fuel-reduction treatments where necessary. Funding for these activities on both the state and federal level must increase and, in fact, investments in fuel reduction treatments could pay for themselves by lowering future wildfire suppression costs (Snider, Daugherty, and Wood 2006).

(Cont'd on page 11)

(Cont'd from page 9)

Issue: “Fire-dependent” Michigan ecosystem types, such as jack pine or paper birch, depend on fire for natural regeneration and forest type perpetuation. Endangered species, like the Kirtland’s warbler and Karner blue butterfly, utilize specific habitats that were historically created by frequent fires. Certain stand characteristics that were historically common, such as the open, low-growing understory of mature red and white pine forests, were maintained by occasional surface fires. Numerous pests are controlled by fires that burn across the forest floor where these organisms complete part of their life cycle. Finally, the now-rare savannas and prairies of Michigan owe their existence to regular fires. Only through implementation of regular prescribed burning by knowledgeable and experienced professionals can these species and ecosystems be maintained or restored to their historic condition.

Issue: Failing to allow professional flexibility in the use of prescribed fire as a management tool can adversely affect both forest values and citizen welfare. Land management agencies and corporate landowners must implement fire-management policies that include both fire suppression and prescribed fire. Exclusion of either will continue to bring unwanted consequences. Use of prescribed fire—as with any tool—has a negative side: prescribed fires occasionally escape and become wildfires, and they produce smoke which can be an annoyance and a health hazard. Professional fire managers and foresters need to build the regular implementation of prescribed fire into their long-range plans and seek adequate funding to carry them out. They also must exercise diligence and responsibility when carrying out fire plans.

Issue: When wildfire occurs in sensitive areas such as a wetland complex, modified fire suppression techniques should be considered. Rather than build fire lines in the wetland soil with heavy machinery, the use of lighter equipment may have less of an environmental impact. Monitoring the advancement of a fire in a wetland area may indicate where resources are needed should the fire escape to hazardous fuel on higher ground or threaten structures.

Discussion

The goal of modern fire management is to minimize fire’s destructive effects while maximizing its long-term ecological and social benefits. This goal can be accomplished only by a combination of a high standard of professional expertise in both wildfire suppression and prescribed fire implementation, increased public awareness of fire’s danger and benefits, and adequate dedicated local, state, and federal funding.

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A position adopted by the Executive Committee of the Michigan Society of American Foresters on March 20, 2002, and revised and extended on May 30, 2007. This position was again revised and extended on October 2, 2013 and 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.