

# 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 forestlands are a valuable, renewable resource. Proper management of these lands enhances air and water quality, soil health, recreational opportunities, visual quality, wood product supply, and wildlife and fish habitat.

About 400,000 non-industrial private forest owners control more than half of Michigan's total forestland base, and their management decisions are often long lasting and, occasionally, irreversible. Although there are numerous programs and natural resource professionals available to help improve the management of these lands, 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. Since less than 20 percent of forest landowners use professional forestry assistance, it is clear that current programs reach few landowners.

Current programs providing assistance, education, or financial incentives are administered and represented by various public and private entities including:

- 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
- College and university natural resource departments
- Forest products companies
- Michigan Forest Products Council
- Consulting foresters
- Michigan Tree Farm Committee
- Michigan Association of Conservation Districts
- Resource conservation & development districts
- Michigan Chapter of Association of Consulting Foresters
- Michigan Sustainable Forest Initiative® Implementation Committee
- Michigan Forest Association
- Michigan Forest Resource Alliance
- Michigan Society of American Foresters
- Land conservancies
- Other private conservation organizations

## **Recommendation:**

The Michigan Society of American Foresters encourages the expansion of programs to help retain private forestlands and improve the management of these lands through:

- 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 landowners develop forest management plans and practices,
- a skilled labor force (including loggers) to carry out forest management practices,
- financial and tax incentives, and
- good markets for forest products.

To accomplish this, the above-mentioned organizations should agree on a set of principles and goals for NIPF programs and their respective roles and responsibilities in implementing these agreements.

In implementing this recommendation, all programs should reflect these concepts:

- Private landowners have diverse goals that may change over time.
- All landowners will benefit from more complete information on which to base their decisions.
- Landowners need to be encouraged to seek professional forest management assistance.
- Professional forest management should be based on the best available information.
- Organizations can be more effective by complementing, encouraging, and collaborating with each other.

*A position adopted by the Executive Committee of the Michigan Society of American Foresters on March 20, 2002, and revised and renewed on January 29, 2007; it 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.*