



2019 ANNUAL REPORT



“Conservation Districts helping family forest owners become stewards.”



December 2019

Background

Michigan's Forestry Assistance Program (FAP) helps family forest owners become active stewards of their forests and woodlands. Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, conservation districts, other state and federal agencies, and private sector natural resource professionals work together to help family forest owners achieve their goals and get the most from their wooded property, at no cost.

The FAP consists of 20 conservation district foresters serving 51 counties. FAP foresters do not compete with the private sector. They serve as an initial point of contact for forestry-related natural resource concerns in their community.

The program is funded through State of Michigan General Funds and restricted revenue from the Private Forestland Enhancement Fund, derived from enrollment in the Qualified Forest Program.



2019 Program Achievements

- \$11.9 million of economic activity through referrals;
- 2,098 landowner site visits;
- 1,129 referrals to the private sector (426 of which were for timber harvests and 524 for the development of forest management plans);
- More than 797 referrals to the public sector for financial assistance and technical assistance; and
- A total of 71 risk assessments completed for the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program's Forest, Wetlands, and Habitat*A*Syst and 62 American Tree Farm System inspections.

2019 Targeted Goals and Accomplishments

1. Increase awareness and enrollment in Michigan's Qualified Forest Program.
2. 2,000 on-site visits to forest properties.
3. 125 MAEAP Forest, Wetlands and Habitat system risk assessments.
4. 1,500 referrals to the public and private sectors.
5. 200 outreach events.
6. 250 articles published in newsletters, magazines, newspapers, radio, or television.
7. Build on the existing structured mentoring framework.
8. Diversify program funding through external grants and partnership agreements.
9. Finalize and implement a multi-year Master Plan.

Enrollment in the Qualified Forest Program (QFP) is critical to the Forestry Assistance Program's longevity. Funds generated from 2-mill equivalent fees are necessary to offset the Forestry Assistance Program's reliance on State of Michigan General Funds. Recent legislative changes and targeted outreach efforts have yielded a tremendous increase in the number of acres enrolled in the fiscal year. In 2018, more than 62,000 acres applied for the QFP, which is close to the annual average. In 2019, more than 170,000 acres applied for the exemption.



The Forestry Assistance Program Training Workgroup is made up of FAP foresters, conservation district managers, and MDARD program staff. The workgroup focuses on training events, developing orientation material for new foresters, and maintaining a structured mentoring program. The structured mentoring program matches Candidate Certified Foresters with Certified Foresters to foster one-on-one relationships to share issues, opportunities, and problem-solving strategies. It promises to help our foresters grow personally and professionally, as well as grow the program.

Even with increased enrollment in the QFP, innovative partnerships are going to sustain the program financially and socially. Currently, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is working with a variety of new partners to craft formalized agreements for grant cost-sharing and training.

In order to make meaningful progress, it's best to proceed with a plan. In 2019, the Forestry Assistance Program continued work on a 10-year Master Plan to evaluate program mission, vision, values, and strategic priorities. This process will continue in 2020 with help from stakeholders.

Events



Outreach events provide community members and natural resource professionals with opportunities to learn from experts. Workshop topics include objectives-based management, timber and taxes, USDA Farm Bill programs, and forest health, to name a few. In 2019, FAP foresters conducted 398 outreach events that were attended by more than 14,500 Michiganders.

Four FAP foresters hosted five American Tree Farm System field days (funded by Michigan Tree Farm). These field days are great opportunities to teach landowners about the American Tree Farm System and other forest conservation programs. Some worked collaboratively with

another conservation district to reach more landowners. American Tree Farm System field days were hosted in Kent, Gladwin, Mason, Manistee, and Otsego Counties.

Referrals

A FAP forester helps the landowner understand how forest management can be a part of accomplishing goals for their property. The landowner is connected to a service provider and/or government program that best suits their resources and goals.

Public sector referrals involve work or assistance directed to an agency or non-governmental organization, usually in the form of program participation for tax savings, financial assistance, technical assistance, or habitat development. The program made 797 referrals to the public sector on more than 109,000 acres.

Referrals to the private sector often involve finding a professional forester to develop a forest management plan or administer a timber sale. Private sector referrals can also include expert testimony for timber trespass issues, road construction, non-commercial habitat development, and many other services. FAP foresters made 1,129 referrals (on nearly 114,000 acres) to the private sector last year. Estimated economic activity through referrals totaled \$11.9 million in 2019.

FAP Camp '19

The training program for Forestry Assistance Program foresters continues to develop. In September, program staff and grantees met in Harris, Michigan for a first-of-its-kind intensive, field-based training (called FAP Camp '19). The three-day training focused on topics such as landowner site visits, the Qualified Forest Program, and making landowner referrals to the private sector.



Goals for 2020

1. Increase awareness and enrollment in Michigan's Qualified Forest Program.
2. Diversify program funding through external grants and partnership agreements.
3. Finalize and implement a multi-year Master Plan.
4. 2,000 on-site visits to forest properties.
5. 1,500 referrals to the public and private sectors.

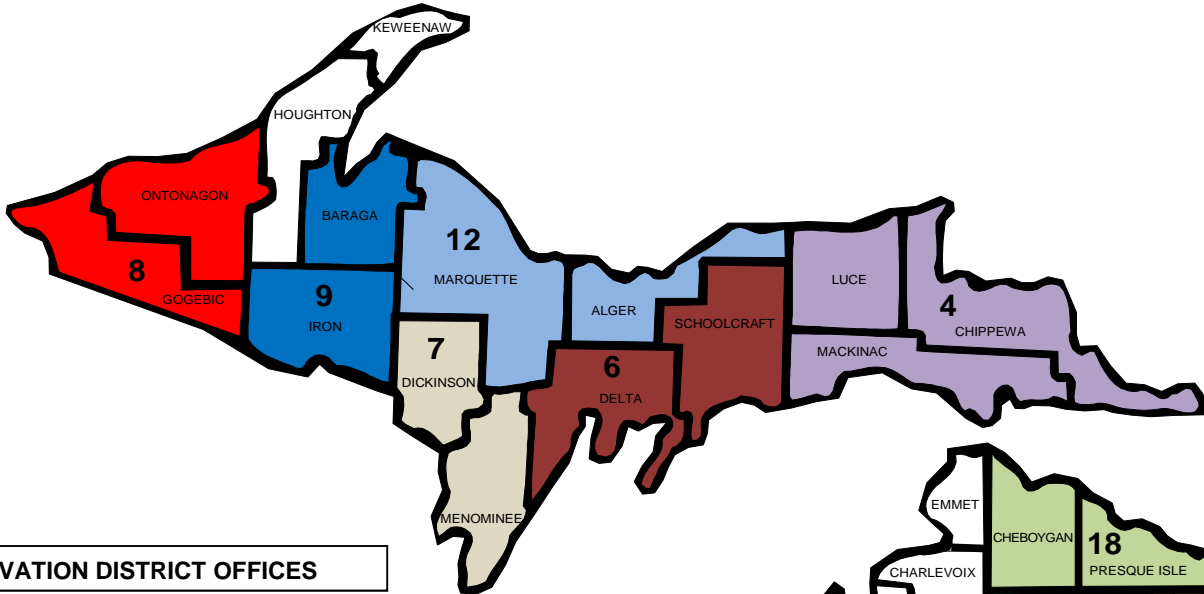


Forestry Assistance Program Staff

John Switzer, Conservation Programs Manager, SwitzerJ3@michigan.gov
Ben Schram, Forestry Assistance Program Coordinator, SchramB1@michigan.gov
Staci Kienitz, Administrative Assistant, KienitzS1@michigan.gov
Rachael Guth, Regional Coordinator, GuthR@michigan.gov
Jack Knorek, Regional Coordinator, KnorekJ@michigan.gov
Jim Pawlowicz, Regional Coordinator, PawlowiczJ@michigan.gov
Christine Roman, Regional Coordinator, RomanC@michigan.gov
Chris Savona, Regional Coordinator, SavonaC@michigan.gov



**MDARD-ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP
DIVISION
FORESTRY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
FY 2019
JOHN SWITZER, MANAGER
517-284-5606
BEN SCHRAM, PROGRAM COORDINATOR
517-284-5617**



CONSERVATION DISTRICT OFFICES

1	Alcona 989-724-5272
2	Alpena-Montmorency 989-356-3596, ext. 3
3	Barry 269-908-4135
4	Chippewa Luce Mackinac 906-635-1278
5	Clare 989-539-6401
6	Delta 906-553-7700
7	Dickinson 906-774-1550, ext. 180
8	Gogebic 906-663-4512
9	Iron 906-875-3765
10	Leelanau 231-256-9783

11	Manistee 231-889-9666, ext. 3004
12	Marquette 906-226-8871, ext. 128
13	Mecosta 231-796-0909, ext. 3
14	Montcalm 989-831-4606, ext. 5
15	Oceana 231-861-5600, ext. 5
16	Oscoda 989-826-8824
17	Otsego 989-732-4021
18	Presque Isle 989-734-4000
19	Tuscola 989-673-8174, ext. 3
20	Wexford 231-775-7681, ext. 3

