

Protect your woods, protect your legacy

Michiganders sure do love their forests, and with around twenty million acres of forested land in the state, there is a lot to love! Around forty percent of this forested area is owned by individuals and families who care for their woods as recreation, wildlife, and timber production resource for themselves and to pass on to future generations. There is an incentive program for forest landowners do just that, with the benefit of saving on their property taxes, the Qualified Forest Program.

The Qualified Forest Program, or QFP for short, is a great option for landowners to manage their woods and enjoy them for years to come. The first step of both sustainable management and QFP enrollment is to have a forest management plan written by a professional forester. Through the plan writing process, your forester will get to know where your property is now (the land, the trees, and other natural features) and where you want to go (your goals). Like planning your route on a map, a good forest management plan can help you reach those goals, whether they are income from timber harvest, wildlife benefits, recreation opportunities, or even just maintaining a healthy natural system.

One landowner from Ottawa County, Larry S., entered the QFP because he enjoys the peacefulness of his woods, and his children love to hunt the property. He wanted to

keep enjoying those benefits today and pass them on to his family for the future. When asked about the planning process, he says, "We talked to a consulting forester, and it just made sense for better deer habitat in the woods. It wasn't difficult to enter QFP at all, the forester took care of everything!" Landowners interested in the QFP are often wary about that entering a forest management program means the property needs to be open to the public. Unlike other

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The Qualified Forest Program can also be a financial boon and help keep your property in the family. This program provides two tax incentives: a reduction of up to 16 mills on the Local School Operating Tax, and the



prevention of uncapping taxable value when the property transfers hands. This is comparable to receiving a Primary Residence Exemption and can produce a considerable saving on taxes. To be eligible, you need to have at least twenty acres of forested land and have a management plan that includes a timber harvest.

If you are interested in learning more about the Qualified Forest Program and how to apply, your local Conservation District Forester can help you through the process. The District Forester provides on-site assessments and professional referrals to landowners with forested land at no charge. For landowners in Allegan, Barry and Ottawa Counties, you can contact District Forester Benjamin Savoie at 269-908-4134, or contact directly by sending an email to ben.savoie@macd.org.

CURRENT OPEN REFERRALS

08-18-26: Multiple parcels eligible for QFP. Most parcels a mix of Oak-Hickory forest with mixed hardwood components. Large scale plantings of mixed pines in plantation. Looking for plan writer for enrollment in next tax year (2020). NRCS Technical Service Provider preferred. Approximately 270 Acres for enrollment.

03-18-23: Looking for lot-clearing service to make space for home, also interested in timber harvest on rest of property. Forest is mostly Red Oaks, Hickories, and White Pine. Roughly 20 acres for harvest.

03-18-29: Small lot in Allegan County with walnut trees for sale. Looking for appraisal and possible sale of few, large, individual trees. 5 Acre woodlot, landowner's primary residence.

03-18-30: Hunting property in Allegan County, some previous selective cutting and oak openings created. First part of property mostly black oaks, lower half composed of white oak, maple, beech, and cherries. Looking for habitat maintenance and possibly interested in QFP. 40 Acres.

If you are interested in any of this work please call Ben Savoie at (269) 908-4139. Ben will make sure that the landowner is aware of your interest and provide your contact information.

This month by the numbers:

10 Initial contacts

8 Site visits of 191 acres

142 acres QFP verified

8 Referrals

Reached 750 children through forest pest outreach

NEW! 2019 Goals

120 site visits

30 QFP enrollments, 1500 acres verified

10 MAEAP A*SYSTS

100 Referrals

12 outreach events

12 media occurrences