



Michigan Tree Farm 2016 Annual Report

Tree Farm is family friendly forestry!



A September inspection of the Gates Family Tree Farm
in Montcalm County with Tree Farmers Amy, Paul and Jim Gates

January, 2017

Michigan Tree Farm Committee

110 West Michigan Avenue, Suite 100, Lansing, MI 48933

Background

The American Tree Farm System celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2016. Tree Farm was started in 1941 in Montesano, Washington by the Weyerhaeuser forest products company to showcase good forest management on private forest land. The American Tree Farm System, now administered by the American Forest Foundation, operates in 44 states and is the premier forest conservation organization for family forest landowners in the United States.

The American Tree Farm System is a forest certification program that demonstrates to the public that private forest land provides sustainable forest products and public goods like clean water and wildlife habitat. Tree Farm has a “Standard of Sustainability” that defines good forest management for landowners and allows foresters and independent auditors to certify their good forest stewardship. Tree Farmers display the “big green sign” to show their neighbors that they are proud of how they manage their forest.



“Tree Farm” certifies forests, not seedling nurseries or Christmas tree farms. In 1941, many private landowners had to plant trees to restore forests that were cutover and burned in the 1800’s and early 1900’s. “Tree Farming” is restoration and ecological forest management in its historical context.

Michigan joined the American Tree Farm System in 1949. Today there are about 850 Tree Farmers in Michigan with more than 200,000 forested acres located in 80 counties. There are 140 professional foresters in Michigan that provide free Tree Farm inspections for landowners.

Accomplishments

The Michigan Tree Farm Committee had many accomplishments in 2016.

- Tree Farm hosted four Field Days in 2016 in Kalamazoo, Barry, Manistee and Mackinac Counties. Field Days are a great opportunity to visit another Tree Farm and learn from other landowners.
- Tree Farm foresters provided 82 inspections for landowners. A Tree Farm inspection is free to the landowner and an opportunity to get a professional evaluation and advice about your forest.
- The committee sent out newsletters in April and October to 850 Tree Farmers. The committee intends to send out two newsletters each year to keep Tree Farmers informed about forestry matters.
- Scott Robbins, Brittany VanderWall and Kaytlyn Brinkman represented Michigan at the National Leadership Conference in Seattle in February. The National Leadership Conference is an opportunity to network with the American Forest Foundation and other state Tree Farm committees to learn about how they serve landowners in their state.
- The committee met quarterly to conduct Tree Farm business. Several people joined the committee in 2016, including Cory Howes, Josh Shields, and Travis Kangas. Quarterly meetings in 2017, open to any Tree Farmer or forester, are scheduled for March 2 (Hartwick Pines), June 1 (St Ignace), September 21 (Tawas) and November 30 (St Ignace). Call Scott Robbins at 517-853-8880 if you would like to attend.

- The committee partnered with Michigan Project Learning Tree to create “Wheels to Woods” in February to provide transportation funding to schools to go on an educational field trip to a nearby public or private forest. Wheels to Woods awarded \$31,344 for 92 trips in 2016 that impacted 8,279 people – 6,820 students, 304 teachers, 81 outdoor educators and 1,074 parents. More info is at www.WheelsToWoods.org if you would like to host a field trip in 2017 at your Tree Farm. Photos from many Wheels to Woods trips are shared at www.Facebook.com/MichiganTreeFarmSystem. Project Learning Tree, also sponsored by the American Forest Foundation, is a network of 3,000 educators in Michigan who love taking students outside to learn about the forest.



105 preschoolers from Big Rock Elementary in Chesaning visited the DeVries Nature Center in Owosso on May 17

Finances

Tree Farmers are not charged for inspections or membership in the American Tree Farm System. The Michigan Tree Farm Committee operates on grants from the American Forest Foundation and other donors. The American Forest Foundation donated \$5,500 for operational expenses in 2016. Seventeen agencies, organizations, companies and individuals donated \$35,250 in support of Wheels to Woods. These 17 donors are listed in the “Wheels to Woods 2016 Annual Report” available at www.WheelsToWoods.org.

The Michigan Tree Farm Committee had \$47,303.81 in assets at the beginning of 2016. The gross income was \$38,307.54 and total expenses were \$43,885.89 for a net loss of \$5,578.35 in 2016. Wheels to Woods accounted for \$24,233.05 in expenses in 2016. The committee ended 2016 with \$41,725.46 in assets.

Budgeted expenses for 2017 might exceed projected income by almost \$15,000 so the committee is seeking new income sources to continue delivering the American Tree Farm System at no cost to landowners. The Michigan Tree Farm Committee is a 501c3 non-profit organization. Tax deductible donations made payable to the “Michigan Tree Farm Committee” can be sent to 110 West Michigan Avenue, Suite 100, Lansing, MI 48933.

Partnerships

The Michigan Tree Farm Committee is a partnership of individuals, private companies and public agencies. The Michigan Forest Products Council provides administrative support from Scott Robbins, Amanda Hattis and student interns. Foresters from several Conservation Districts participate on the committee, including Brittany VanderWall (Chair), Travis Kangas, Josh Shields and Nick Sanchez. Several consulting foresters serve on the committee including Jeff Tuller, Kaytlyn Brinkman and Dean Reid. Industry foresters also participate on the committee including Cory Howes, Jeff Major and Dave Kossak. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Mike Smalligan of the Forest Stewardship Program actively support Tree Farm by providing funding from multiple grants from the United State Forest Service. Other supporting agencies include the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Karen Serfass, a Tree Farmer from Chippewa County, is the treasurer for the committee and does great work keeping the books and sending out dozens of Wheels to Woods payments in 2016, even including a hand-written thank-you note to the teachers. The American Forest Foundation is the national sponsor for the American Tree Farm System.

Goals and Objectives for 2017

The goal of the Michigan Tree Farm Committee is to provide great customer service to the 850 Michigan Tree Farmers, and their 140 foresters, who certify their family forest in the American Tree Farm System.

The Michigan Tree Farm Committee has several specific objectives for 2017:

- Provide 100 Tree Farm inspections, at no cost to landowners, to 75 current and 25 new Tree Farmers
- Pay inspectors \$100 for each forest inspection (with “Forests for Fish” funding from the DNR and USFS)
- Host five Tree Farm Field Days in partnership with local Conservation District foresters
- Partner with the Michigan Forest Association for their annual meeting on September 22-23 in Tawas
- Pay for 100 Wheels to Woods field trips for 10,000 urban and rural students, teachers and parents
- Support the 2018 National Woodland Owner Survey with the United States Forest Service
- Partner with land conservancies to certify forests with working forest easements
- Diversify and expand the funding sources for the Michigan Tree Farm Committee

Michigan Tree Farm Committee

Administrator - Scott Robbins, Michigan Forest Products Council - srobbins@michiganforest.com

Chair - Brittany VanderWall, Presque Isle Conservation District - brittany.vanderwall@macd.org

Vice-Chair - Mike Smalligan, Michigan Department of Natural Resources – smalliganm@michigan.gov

Treasurer - Karen Serfass, Chippewa County Tree Farmer - rkwinserf@yahoo.com

Communication – Amanda Hattis, Michigan Forest Products Council - asumerix@michiganforest.com

Regional Coordinators

- West UP - Cory Howes, JM Longyear - corymhowes@gmail.com
- Central UP - Gary Bucklin, consulting forester - gbucklin1@gmail.com
- East UP – Travis Kangas, Chippewa Conservation District - travis.kangas@macd.org
- Northern LP – Kayti Brinkman, Martell Forestry - kaytlyn@martellforestry.com
- Middle LP – Josh Shields, Manistee Conservation District - joshua.shields@macd.org
- Southwest LP – Nick Sanchez, Montcalm Conservation District - Nick.Sanchez@mi.nacdnet.net
- Southeast LP - Jeff Tuller, consulting forester - tuller@straightturn.com