**Woodland Ownership Programs**

**Forest ownership lends eligibility to a number of assistance programs, which can sometimes be a bit bewildering.  Mining forestry program benefits begins with better understanding the goals of ownership.**

Managing a woodland results in many rewards; more money, lots of fun, stewardship satisfaction, family bonding, healthier conditions, better habitat, and so on.  A managed forest also adds strength to our economies and lifestyles.  It’s this greater social benefit package that prompts government to make some offers to woodland owners on behalf of their citizenries.
     Most assistance programs are funded through either the federal or state governments.  To a lesser extent, and likely to be more local, are programs through forest industries, land conservancies, and special interest groups and associations.  All of these programs have websites filled with good information, if you know they exist.
     From the State of Michigan, there are two property tax abatement programs for woodland owners interested in forest management.  The [Commercial Forest](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__www.michigan.gov_dnr_0-2C4570-2C7-2D153-2D30301-5F34240-5F68191-2D-2D-2D-2C00.html&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=LiGvEmDGu5dzvGM0jNP3IkW1st6uPsNoBTYFJDISaPk&e=) (CF) program replaces regular property taxes with a straight $1.25 per acre.  The [Qualified Forest Property](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__www.michigan.gov_mdard_0-2C4610-2C7-2D125-2D1599-5F28740-2D-2D-2D-2C00.html&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=q_omJ7CdYWcBETylBEke7Ah55pyz8Y-Sc5Z8AVRBmoc&e=)(QFP) program exempts owners from the school operating taxes levied by local taxing units.
     Of course, each program has eligibility requirements, fees, and protocols.  After all, the government wants something in return for those tax reductions.  Both programs require management plans with timber harvest schedules.  For many owners, one of the most important differences is whether or not public access is allowed.  The CF program opens enrolled forest to foot access for hunting, fishing, and trapping.  The QFP program allows land to remain posted.  That’s part of the reason the tax breaks are greater for the CF lands.
     The DNR’s [Forest Stewardship Program](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__www.michigan.gov_dnr_0-2C4570-2C7-2D153-2D30301-5F34240-5F68762-2D-2D-2D-2C00.html&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=V1St0sg9QfMpxjtHaca6XHE_rUELIr02AwrKfgQ9U2o&e=)(FSP) helps fund forest management plans, which can be used for a variety of applications, if done appropriately.  The program maintains a list of approved plan-writers, which is also a [good list](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__www.michigan.gov_dnr_0-2C4570-2C7-2D153-2D30301-5F34240-5F68762-2D298690-2D-2D-2C00.html&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=5akZUZlTJOCACcIPOLc734TvMhdmLF93iDcGw2JACdA&e=) for obtaining other forestry expertise.
    The USDA [Natural Resource Conservation Service](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.nrcs.usda.gov_wps_portal_nrcs_site_mi_home_&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=0VYg8tfAHUkvG5iaR3cQbNxuhpql2onFdEZ4goCkUVY&e=) (NRCS) and the [Michigan Tree Farm Program](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.treefarmsystem.org_michigan&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=0TJ3UYWKDMMRM2C6RT4lJPZiuwy74ohV2oJa3UCER5A&e=) are other avenues to obtain a forest management plan that will allow woodland owners to become eligible for additional funding to help implement certain management practices.
     The NRCS also has a list of plan-writers, called “technical service providers” (or [TSPs](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__techreg.sc.egov.usda.gov_CustLocateTSP.aspx&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=taqtn9b3P1PvmjfeLyMS_K8NOTEVJH8hZzu68mVQXNs&e=)).  Many of them are the same people that are on the DNR FSP list.  For woodland owners, the NRCS manages two programs of particular interest to woodland owners; 1) Environmental Quality Improvement Program ([EQIP](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.nrcs.usda.gov_wps_portal_nrcs_detail_mi_programs_financial_eqip_-3Fcid-3Dnrcs141p2-5F024538&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=kj67p76rQGtKGyoR5Rtf_XmwU_FGymNhk0lWtyg9y5U&e=)), and the 2) Conservation Stewardship Program ([CSP](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.nrcs.usda.gov_wps_portal_nrcs_detail_mi_programs_financial_csp_-3Fcid-3Dnrcs141p2-5F024531&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=nb2cfj3RrHqYbZmLfWgnEfog5pOypkB-hWJ9I2kyojg&e=)).
     The [Michigan Tree Farm Program](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.treefarmsystem.org_michigan&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=0TJ3UYWKDMMRM2C6RT4lJPZiuwy74ohV2oJa3UCER5A&e=) (MTFP) uses a network of volunteer inspectors to help woodland owners write management plans.  Forest certification is one advantage of enrollment in the MTFP.  This status will help some logging contractors sell into markets that they might otherwise have less access into.
     Site visits by a forester or biologist are often desirable to woodland owners.   However, most professionals haven’t the time to provide free services.  One solution to this barrier is the [Forestry Assistance Program](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__www.michigan.gov_mdard_0-2C4610-2C7-2D125-2D1599-5F28740-2D-2D-2D-2C00.html&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=q_omJ7CdYWcBETylBEke7Ah55pyz8Y-Sc5Z8AVRBmoc&e=) (FAP) that’s run through some of the County Conservation Districts ([MACD](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__macd.org_&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=Qf0fnCI6jsWRh4q1WPQkjqyDt7vSIlwuRuCmPAuHrs0&e=)).  These FAP foresters can visit with woodland owners, on site, and discuss options and avenues for a course of action.  They can help untangle what can seem to be a maze of possibilities or, perhaps, simply a foggy black box of unknowns.

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As an MSU Extension forester, I provide educational programming for the entire Upper Peninsula.  My office is located at the MSU Forest Biomass Innovation Center near Escanaba.  The Center is the headquarters for three MSU Forestry properties in the U.P., with a combined area of about 8,000 acres.  A collection of these newspaper articles, back to July 1997, can be viewed on the following website:  [*http://michigansaf.org/ForestInfo/Newspaper/0000-Directory.htm*](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__michigansaf.org_ForestInfo_Newspaper_0000-2DDirectory.htm&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=5ZsyOsVHQiku6pA0cpLdUuWQLA-ZNeGhK0Z9hHYUU-k&e=)or under the "Forest Info" button of [*http://michigansaf.org*](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__michigansaf.org_&d=DwMFAg&c=nE__W8dFE-shTxStwXtp0A&r=o9zWYaNKN9CvJy4REo0gTBUE1AWWlQt4ERA3IULqBeE&m=LcvLqLzR1PyQVCIMyppTvTNXs1SgVfJrA81wAHUPPBU&s=4gQKqk42ua3mgAiaLmZzHmpmPUedBACXloc02NrtAoc&e=). .

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