



# *-Forest Recreation-* **Forest Ownership and Recreation Activities**

Adapted from the on-line Teachers Guide  
<http://mff.dsisd.net>

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Michigan has some of the finest quality forest-based recreation in North America. Forests cover over half our state and has the fifth largest area of timberland in the United States. Snowy winters and hot summers accommodate a wide variety of activities. Proximity to four of the five Great Lakes, plus the thousands of inland lakes and miles of rivers and streams, add to the diversity of our landscape.

### **What Is Forest-based Recreation?**

Basically, pleasure and leisure activities that happen in forests, near forests, or at least partially because of forests can be described as forest-based recreation. The CD-ROM identifies eight categories of recreation, some of which are indirectly related to forests.

The categories are:

*aquatics*  
*camping*  
*gathering*  
*hunting*  
*motorized trail riding*  
*non-motorized trail use*  
*waterfall "hunting"*  
*wildlife viewing*

### **The Importance of Forest Recreation**

There are several facets of "importance" related to forest recreation. *Lifestyle and family tradition* would likely rate high on anyone's priority list, but is difficult to quantify. The *tourism* aspect certainly can be translated into dollars and economic impact, although carving out the part attributable to just forest-based recreation is problematic. Lastly, recreation changes the way in which many people *perceive the value of the forest* in relation to other uses.

### **Lifestyle and Family Tradition**

Just knowing that healthy, growing forests are abundant in Michigan offers comfort to many people. Studies show that Americans care deeply about trees and forests. Try to imagine how different our lifestyles might be without forests nearby. Think of North Dakota or any of the plains states! Michigan residents (and non-residents) value camps, second homes "up north", and family vacations and outings. It's part of our culture.

In Michigan, you are never far from a forest, even in our large metro areas. Forest preserves, woodlots, parks, and public forests all offer a variety of benefits and opportunities.

A study done in the eastern U.P. (McDonough, et al.) counted over a half-million person-days of forest-based activities just by residents! That's about 10.5 days per resident per year. Over half the study respondents indicated the following three strategies as most important; 1) setting aside natural areas, 2) tourism, and 3) more outdoor recreation opportunities. Over half the households participated in wildlife watching, fishing, berry picking, wildlife feeding, and hunting.

## Economic Impact

Certainly the popularity of forest-based tourism makes significant contributions to the state and local economies. Michigan accounts for nearly half the outdoor recreation dollars among the Lake States (Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota). Michigan forest tourism generates around \$4 billion each year and is a major portion of the economies in the northern Lower Peninsula, the Mackinac Straits, and the Keweenaw Peninsula (GLFA, 1996). The Michigan Forest Resource Alliance states that Michigan forest-based tourism adds about \$3 billion to the economy each year, supporting 50,000 jobs. That compares to roughly \$9 billion from forest industry and 150,000 jobs. The relative importance of forest-based tourism with forest industry and other economic sectors will vary widely from county to county.

EUP Economic Sector	Value-Added Dollars	Number of Employees	<i>It is a confusing exercise to try and understand apparently conflicting data about economic indicators related to natural resources and tourism. Studies are uncommon and don't often use the same set of measurement criteria. Nevertheless, it is clear that forest-based recreation is a key factor to the economic well-being of many of our rural counties, especially those located in northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. It is also clear that forest management and forest recreation are intertwined. A Lake States Forest Alliance study shows that most counties with both industry and recreation have stronger local economies than those counties with just one or the other. It also seems apparent that the importance of forest-based recreation is growing.</i>
Tourism	93,100,000	---	
Wood Products	63,200,000	665	
Agriculture	12,500,000	590	
Mining	7,000,000	109	
Fishing	1,200,000	230	
Source: McDonough, et al., 1999.			

Separating direct and indirect impacts, and *forest-based* impacts from other recreation impacts can be difficult. The eastern U.P. (EUP) study calculated 93 million value-added dollars were due to general tourism in 1995. Traditional sectors of fishing, and farming products have declined, while tourism and forest industries have grown. The largest industry value-added category in the EUP study was government. The relationship between natural resource and tourism sectors will vary from county to county and among the regions of Michigan.

## Perception of Forest Values

People who experience forests only through recreation may grow ambivalent, or even antagonistic toward forest *management*, especially timber production. Even issues of environmental quality, endangered species, and landscape attributes may take a back

seat to recreation values. Urban and suburban visitors who recreate in forests often value forests differently than rural residents who live and work in forests. Retirees and seasonal residents are sometimes reluctant to fund local tax increases for school projects, infrastructure development, and similar purposes, yet may increase demand for better roads, police and fire protection, and medical services.

The quality of life associated with rural forests attracts greater numbers of retirees and seasonal home owners. Forest values and perceptions of new (or returning) landowners may be different from those of long-term and permanent residents. In the EUP study, seasonal residents more strongly favored limited growth and increased numbers of set-aside natural areas. Permanent residents tended to favor additional manufacturing, tourism, forest industries, and timber harvest.

### **Forest-Based Recreation Activities**

Studies of recreation can be "sliced and diced" many different ways. The portion directly attributable to forests is sometimes difficult to extract. Swimming, for example, is not really a forest-based activity unto itself, but would swimming statistics at state forest beaches be the same if there were no forests to attract people in the first place? Would a wildland stream attract the same number of visitor days for canoeing and fishing if it were not bordered by forest? How would motel, restaurant, and gas station incomes during the snowmobile season be affected if there were no forest, or the forest had unattractive attributes?

The "Michigan Forests Forever" CD-ROM categorizes forest recreation eight ways.

<b>Aquatics</b>	<b>Motorized Trails</b>
<b>Camping</b>	<b>Non-motorized Trails</b>
<b>Gathering</b>	<b>Waterfalls</b>
<b>Hunting &amp; Trapping</b>	<b>Wildlife Viewing</b>

Forest recreation can be described in quantitative and qualitative terms. The numbers and days for many activities are available. There are many miles of trails and thousands of designated campsites. The statistics suggest a high use of our forests for recreation, which is not a surprise. However, the actual numbers of some activities might be an eye-opener of some. They also suggest that recreation activities are concentrated on relatively few acres, either a point such as a campground or a linear corridor such as a snowmobile trail. Most of our forest acres actually have very low visitor use.

Finding information about the **qualitative** aspects of forest recreation is more difficult.

- What is a quality experience? For whom?
- At what point do use levels and development begin to make the experience unacceptable to the more sensitive user?

- How many docks does it take before the lakeshore appearance loses its wild character? How many cabins? In whose opinion?
- Should forest recreation be managed for the masses without concern for the minority who seek solitude and wildness?
- What is wildness? Is it only a congressionally designated wilderness area?
- How many state forest campers are offended by the use of a portable generator by an RV owner? Or a radio?

For some, forest recreation, might simply be a place away from home that has lots of trees and no stoplights. For others, wildness might be compromised by the presence of an invasive exotic plant species or an old logging road.

## **Miles, Numbers, and Counts**

Public agencies are reasonably good at maintaining visitor use statistics for their particular jurisdictions. At first, it would seem a fairly simple task of contacting the agencies and adding their numbers together. However, public agencies manage only about a third of our forest resource. There is a large amount of recreation that occurs on commercial forests and private, non-industrial forests. Additionally, agencies will use different census techniques and different units of measurement, making a simple addition a questionable practice. However, by looking at a few examples it is easy to see just how important forest recreation is in Michigan.

### **State Forest Bullets** (land owned by the State of Michigan)

- 18.4 million visits per year
- 13,000 miles of trout waters
- 8,000 miles of forest roads
- 7,000 miles of canoe routes
- 6,000 miles groomed snowmobile trails
- 3,100+ miles of ORV trails & routes
- 3,000 campsites in 145 campgrounds
- 880 miles of hiking, biking, & pathway trails
- 657 rail-to-trail conversions
- 600+ access sites to lakes & rivers
- 500 miles of Great Lakes shoreline
- 355 miles of shore-to-shore trail
- 242 miles of groomed ski trails

## **List of Forest Recreation Activities**

This list could get very long, depending if you're a "lumper" or a "splitter" when it comes to categorizing things. How many of the following activities have students in your class done?

Hiking	Deer Hunting	Butterfly Catching	Pleasure Driving
Mountain Biking	Waterfall Hunting	Fishing	Leaf-Peeping
Swimming	Bird Watching	Dirt Biking	Gathering
Berry Picking	Camping	Bird Hunting	Snowmobiling
Mushroom Hunting	Backpacking	Tree Climbing	Exploring

ATV / Four-Wheeling	Canoeing	Wildflower Hunting	Wood Cutting
Photography	Kayaking	Horseback Riding	RV-ing
Downhill Skiing	Trapping	Dog Sledding	Tobogganing
Picnicking	Dog Training	Historic Sites	Outdoor Education
Dune Climbing	Frog Catching	Bug Collecting	Listening to Night Sounds
Relaxing	Rock Climbing	Snowshoeing	Cross-Country Skiing
Nature Centers	Orienteering		

## **Hunting in Michigan**

Hunting, especially deer hunting, is a long-standing, popular, and powerful tradition. Each year, over three-quarters of a million people take to the forests to shoot a deer or other game. The tradition is filled with family experiences, collection of friends, and plenty of lore. Deer have almost taken-on an aura of mystical proportion among many; together with a collection of facts and fantasy. It is an enterprise that some say is worth several billions of dollars each year to Michigan.

All of our game species are forest dependent, especially the early successional forests like aspen and oak. Forest management has played a critical role in maintaining habitat suitable for game species. Some would argue that the habitat is too favorable; to the point where deer have become serious threats to the forest in some areas. Hunting is one of the few tools available to resource managers to keep herd sizes in check.

Much of the state forest lands were purchased under certain federal acts for the purpose of wildlife (game) management. Pittman-Robertson (1937) and Clarke-McNary (1924) are two of the most important acts. Pittman-Robertson placed a federal tax on hunting equipment and ammunition to pay for wildlife research and development. Clarke-McNary provided funds for tree planting, forestry agencies, wildfire suppression, and the acquisition of land.

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## **Forest Ownership and Recreation**

Owners of forest property dictate the nature and intensity of recreation opportunities on their land . . . more or less. Ownership objectives will vary widely. Public lands tend to place more emphasis on providing recreational activities than private lands because they generally adopt a more "multiple use" concept toward forest management. However, not all public lands have the same recreation objectives. Federally designated wilderness areas or Michigan Scientific Areas have restrictions. And although many privately owned acres are open to public recreation, the opportunities are often restricted to hunting and fishing. Other private ownerships, especially forest industry, tend to allow most forms of recreation as long as abuses do not occur. For more information on forest ownership in Michigan, visit the Tree Basics Chapter "***Forest Descriptors.***"

The CD-ROM highlights four general ownership categories, national forests, national parks, state lands, and commercial forests. It is important for forest-users to appreciate recreation differences based on ownership and be certain to respect the wishes of the owner or managers of the forest.



**National Forests** - 2,900,000 acres  
*Ottawa, Hiawatha, Huron-Manistee*

Michigan contains three national forests, the Ottawa (~1,000,000 acres), the Hiawatha (880,000 acres), and the Huron-Manistee (~1,000,000 acres). The national forests offer a wide-variety of recreation. National Forests provide almost unlimited recreational opportunities, from camping (free) allowed nearly anywhere on the forest to developed and handicapped-accessible facilities (fees required). The National Forests have over 75 campground units, miles of rivers, hiking trails, snowmobile trails, many inland lakes, cabin rentals, and many waterfalls.



Wilderness Areas are special categories of federal land. They are created by Act of Congress and have specific meanings and restrictions. In Michigan, there are ten national forest wilderness areas, three on the Ottawa, six on the Hiawatha, and one on the Huron-Manistee. These designated areas cover about 91,000 acres. However, you don't always need a formal Wilderness Area to experience the qualities of wildness. There are over two million acres of "wild" country on National Forests and millions more on other ownerships.

The three forests host nearly *eight million* recreation visits each year. Michigan National Forests are within an eight-hour drive of major metropolitan areas of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Detroit. That means fairly easy vacation access for about 25 million people!

Like most public lands, the creation of the National Forests was piecemeal through a variety of Congressional Acts. Much of the land reverted from tax delinquent properties in the 1920s and 1930s. It is important to remember the history of our national and other public forests. For most part, they started out as cut-over, burned, and abused lands. Natural recovery and decades of forest management have created the landscapes we enjoy today. Visit the Michigan **Forest History** chapter for more information.

The U.S. Forest Service is part of the **U.S. Department of Agriculture** and has three main branches. The National Forest System is the most well-known. The other two branches are State and Private Forestry and Research Experimental Stations. National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges are NOT part of the Forest Service.





**National Parks** - 630,000 acres  
<http://www.nps.gov/index.htm>

National Parks are managed almost exclusively for low intensity recreation and wilderness values, based on special features in the landscape. Many restrictions are usually in effect in national parks and resource management activities are minimized or prohibited by management plans. Michigan has four park units; Isle Royale National Park, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, and Keweenaw National Historic Park.



The parks receive about 1.8 million visits each year. Most of the visits are at Sleeping Bear Dunes. Isle Royale receives the fewest visits, mostly due to its remote location off the shore of Ontario. Keweenaw National Historic Park is a new addition, designated in 1992.

The National Lakeshores contain some of Michigan's most dramatic Great Lakes scenery, but also have terrific inland features as well. There are only four National Lakeshores in the United States, all on the Great Lakes. **Sleeping Bear Dunes** (57,000 acres) *"was established primarily for its outstanding natural features, including forests, beaches, dune formations, and ancient glacial phenomena. The Lakeshore also contains many cultural features including a 1871 lighthouse, three former Life-Saving Service/Coast Guard Stations and an extensive rural historic farm district."*

**Pictured Rocks** (35,725 acres) features *"multicolored sandstone cliffs, beaches, sand dunes, waterfalls, inland lakes, wildlife and the forest of Lake Superior shoreline. Attractions include a lighthouse and former Coast Guard life-saving stations along with old farmsteads and orchards. At its widest point the Lakeshore is only five miles and hugs the Superior shoreline for more than 40 miles."*

**Isle Royale** (539,300 acres) offers spectacular scenery, a world-renowned long-term moose-wolf study, and uncommon plant associations and rare species. It is, by far, Michigan's largest National Park Service unit. *"There is excellent fishing, historic lighthouses and shipwrecks, ancient copper mining sites, and plenty of spots to observe wildlife. Roadless Isle Royale is accessible only by boat or float plane. Isle Royale is relatively untouched by direct outside influences and serves as a living laboratory and Unites States Biosphere Reserve."* However, Isle Royale used to be a commercial fishing center and was mined for copper. Much of the island was burned over in a horrendous 1936 wildfire. The Civilian Conservation Corps fought the fire and later built many facilities in the 1930s.

**Keweenaw** has almost no acreage but seeks to maintain cultural resources from the historic copper mining era, which goes back 7,000 years. *"The Keweenaw Peninsula was the site of America's first large scale hard-rock industrial mining operations. The*

*copper mines of the Keweenaw were critical to the industrial development of the United States. Mine shafts here reached over 9,000 feet deep. The men who labored, and sometimes died in these mines, along with the women who nurtured them, gave the Keweenaw Peninsula a rich mix of language, costume and custom."*

The National Park Service is part of the **U.S. Department of the Interior** and includes parks, lakeshores, trails, monuments, historic sites. It is NOT part of the Forest Service, which is in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



**National Wildlife Refuges** - 114,000 acres

<http://midwest.fws.gov/>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the national network of wildlife refuges and performs other functions. Recreation opportunities on national refuges are sometimes limited by regulations designed to protect sensitive areas or certain wildlife species. However, on other refuges, a wide variety of activities are permitted, including hunting, fishing, boating, etc. Of course, the main attraction would be wildlife viewing! These properties host 145,000 visitors each year.



Most of Michigan's national wildlife refuges are small. The largest refuge is the 95,000 acre Seney Unit, located in the central U.P. Other large refuges are the Shiawassee (9300 acres) in near Saginaw, and the Kirtland's Warbler (6500 acres) in the central Lower Peninsula.

The Fish and Wildlife Service are part of the **U.S. Department of Interior**, the same as the National Park Service.

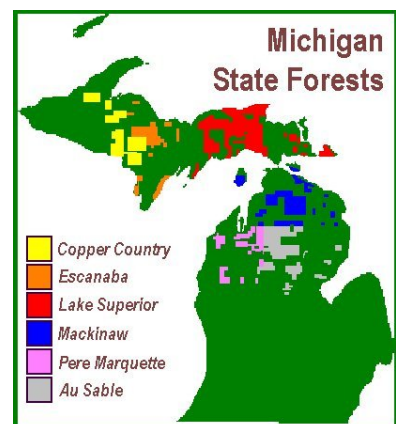


**State Lands** - 4,150,000 acres

<http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/>

### State Forests

The State of Michigan owns nearly four million acres of land and has the largest State Forest System in the lower 48 states (Alaska has the largest). The State Forests experience about 18 million visits each year. There are six state forests;



- Copper Country (440,000 acres - U.P.)
- Escanaba (420,400 acres - U.P.)
- Lake Superior (1,040,000 acres - U.P.)
- Mackinaw (721,500 acres - L.P.)
- Pere Marquette (551,000 acres - L.P.)
- and the Au Sable (766,600 acres - L.P.)

While our State Forests are important to Michigan for many reasons, recreation is probably the first use that comes to mind for most people. Most campgrounds are rustic (pit toilets and hand pumps), in contrast to the more developed facilities at State Parks and on National Forests. State Forests have 145 campgrounds with over 3,000 campsites. Additionally, there are 880 miles of hiking trails, 240 miles of ski trails, 6,000 miles of snowmobile trails, 7,000 miles of canoe routes, 500 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, 600 miles along inland lakes & river, and over 3,000 miles of ORV trails. The 8,000 miles of forest roads offer many opportunities for mountain-bikers, horseback riders, back-country drives, ungroomed snowmobiling, and other activities.

Like all campgrounds, there are overnight fees, but vehicles do not require entry stickers. Similar to the National Forests, camping is permitted for free anywhere on the State Forests, except for campgrounds and other special use areas.

State Forests are not the same as National Forests, although they will look pretty much the same to most visitors and offer similar recreational opportunities. However, the different ownerships result in different management emphases, although both public forest systems practice multiple-use management. State Forests are owned by the citizens of Michigan and are managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. National Forests are owned by citizens of the United States and are managed by U.S. Forest Service, headquartered from Washington, D.C.

### State Parks

96 State Parks and Recreation Areas are located throughout Michigan covering over 250,000 acres. Parks feature special places in our landscape and celebrate our history and culture. State Parks are host to over 20 million visitors and campers each year, making them some of the most heavily used recreation areas in Michigan.

The two largest State Parks are located in the Upper Peninsula. The Porcupine Mountains have 60,000 acres and Tahquamenon Falls has 40,000 acres. Both parks offer outstanding physical characteristics, including Michigan's largest waterfall. State Parks hold 115 miles of Great Lakes frontage and over 200 miles along inland lakes and rivers. There are over 14,000 campsites. Michigan's first state park was on Mackinac Island, established in 1895.



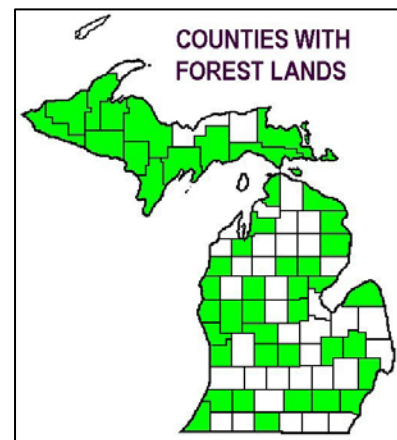
State Parks have many of the opportunities expected, such as camping, picnicking, hiking, biking, snowmobiling, skiing, and fishing. Hunting is allowed in many State Parks, but often only at certain times, for certain species, and with certain weapons. Most facilities include showers, flush toilets, electrical hook-ups, RV sanitary stations, and playgrounds. Some State Parks also offer rental cabins, wilderness areas (not federal wilderness), old growth, historical re-enactments, old forts, downhill skiing, wheelchair access, Artesian wells and large spring-fed pools, interpretive programs, special ORV (off-road vehicles) areas, and other lesser known activities.

Vehicles are required to purchase an entry sticker and campgrounds have overnight fees. In some parks, picnic shelters can be rented and reserved. For information about particular parks, try the DNR website.



### **Local Government Forests** - 260,000 acres

Local governments in over half the counties in Michigan own forest land. These forests are owned by the residents of a county, township, or city and are generally managed according to the wishes of the local residents. The forests are administered by different boards, councils, and commissions and not all are interested in natural resources.



Recreation occupies a prominent role in some sets of management objectives, although some rural counties know that timber management can provide significant revenue on a sustainable basis. Other counties own forest land for non-forest uses such as gravel pit expansion, future county building construction, landfill sites, housing developments, etc.

Michigan's largest county forest (62,000 acres) is located in Gogebic County, at the far west end of the Upper Peninsula. The second largest forest (12,000 acres) is located in Marquette County. Both are actively managed, as are most larger forests. Most county or municipal ownerships are much smaller.

County forests offer many of the same recreational opportunities as other public forests, but they are often underutilized. On the other hand, some of the county/municipal forests and parks receive high levels of use, especially day-only activities.

Compared to Wisconsin and Minnesota, our county forests are a small piece of the landscape. Most of the Michigan tax delinquent lands in the 1920s and 1930s ended up in state or federal government. In Wisconsin and Minnesota, much these lands ended up in county ownership, with over two million acres in each state.



### **Commercial Forests** - 3,500,000 acres

The Michigan legislature offers tax reduction to private forest owners willing to manage their forest for timber production and allow public hunting and fishing. Over two million acres of forest are enrolled in this Commercial Forest program, mostly industrial ownership. Michigan's largest enrollees are Plum Creek Corporation, former International Paper lands, The ForestLand Group, and the Keweenaw Land Association with more than 1.5 million acres in the tax program.



Enrolled lands are open to hunting and fishing, but only foot access is guaranteed under the rules. The public does not have a "right" to drive ATVs, trucks, or cars onto CFP tax lands, although this is often permitted by the land owners. Gates are legally erected in any areas where vehicle access is not wanted.

Other forest recreation activities are also allowed by the land owners, but these are not guaranteed under the tax program. As a matter of courtesy and a point of information, it is always a good idea to check with the owner before using a property. Sometimes, maps are made available to forest users. Not ALL industrial forest is listed under the tax program. It's a good idea to make sure the land you wish to use is open to the public and what is permitted when it is open.



### **Private Non-industrial Forest** - 8,500,000 acres

This category of land (PNIF) is not mentioned in the CD-ROM but makes up about 45 percent of Michigan's timberland! These owners are the Moms and Pops, hunting clubs, partnerships, and the like. Access to most of these lands is not open to the public and property is often posted against trespassing. However, PNIF owners will often permit trails to cross their property and there are many privately owned campgrounds, RV parks, and natural attractions. Some PNIF land is enrolled in Michigan's Commercial Forest program, as mentioned in the Commercial Forest section.

PNIF ownership is more concentrated in the Lower Peninsula, making up 59 percent of the timberland, with only 26 percent of the Upper Peninsula timberland. The U.P. has large proportions of both industry-owned forest AND public forest (a very unusual



arrangement in the USA). However, Menominee County (U.P.) has the largest PNIF acreage in Michigan, although it is only 58 percent of the timberland. Bay and Hillsdale Counties have fairly small acreages, but are nearly entirely privately owned. This trend reflects ownership differences from north to south.

### **Qualified Forest Property Program**

In 2006, a new forest management incentive program was introduced to Michigan. The QFP program exempts eligible forest property from local school taxes, usually 18 mills in rural areas. The rules for eligibility are similar to the Commercial Forest program but enrolled forest lands do *not* need to be made open to the public. For many private forest owners, this is an important feature of the QFP program. Statewide, a total of 300,000 acres may be enrolled each year, up to 1,200,000 acres.

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