

Chapter 9: Private Forest Stewardship

Private, nonindustrial landowners—farmers, rural residents, lake property owners—own some of the most valuable forest land in Minnesota. Unlike government or industrial landowners, most lack the professional forestry expertise needed to keep their forests healthy and producing whatever amenities they desire, be they habitat, recreation, timber, or some other benefit.

To help keep these forests diverse, healthy, and able to meet multiple goals, DNR Forestry works with the U.S. Forest Service, nonprofit groups, consulting and industrial foresters, soil and water conservation district resource professionals, and others to provide education and technical assistance to private landowners. Through workshops, written information, Web sites, and one-on-one consultation, we help them understand the value of planning and translate their dreams into sound, sustainable management plans.

Minnesota's 147,000 private nonindustrial forest landowners control some 35 percent of the state's total forest land.

DNR Forestry prepares forest stewardship plans free of charge. We also reimburse many plan preparers outside the DNR.

In recent years, forest stewardship plans have been written for some 60,000 to 120,000 acres of land annually.

Follow Through

After we help develop a forest stewardship plan, we provide advice and hands-on technical assistance to help turn dreams into reality. We also help the landowner connect with federal incentive plans and other sources of financial assistance for improving forest lands.

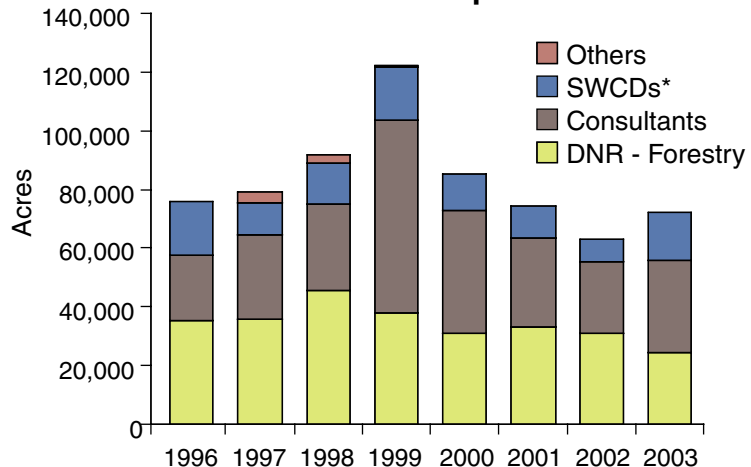
Over the years, federal and state governments have created various programs to encourage the proper management of private lands. These programs often use a combination of education and technical assistance to make sure landowners get the information they need to make land man-

Forest Certification. We encourage private forest owners whose forest management plans include timber harvesting to pursue third-party certification of their lands. Certification provides independent verification that a forest is being managed sustainably and lets consumers know that wood they purchase was produced in an environmentally sound manner. For more information on forest certification, contact your local DNR Forestry office (see page 4).

The Forest Stewardship Plan

The hallmark of our private assistance efforts is the Forest Stewardship Plan Program. Any private landowner with between 20 and 5,000 acres of land, at least 10 acres of which has (or will have) trees, is eligible to participate. A DNR forester or other plan preparer meets with the landowner to identify goals—generating income, protecting biodiversity, providing for outdoor recreation, and so on. We go over the other functions the land has, including maintaining a healthy ecosystem. Then we help develop a plan the landowner (and future landowners, if the property changes hands) can use to manage the property.

Minnesota Acreage Annually Covered by Forest Stewardship Plans



*SWCDs = Soil and Water Conservation districts

Source: DNR Division of Forestry

agement decisions in an ecologically sound manner. In some cases financial incentives are offered to help defray the cost of installing certain management practices.

To date, DNR Forestry and partners have prepared forest stewardship plans covering more than 1.1 million acres of land. Our goal is to have half of all Minnesota forest land under nonindustrial private ownership managed under stewardship plans.

A Forest Legacy

Minnesota's Forest Legacy Program provides a means to preserve forest land in the face of development pressure. Under the program, a landowner sells the right to develop the land to the state, which holds it as a perpetual easement. The landowner retains ownership and the right to use the land in any way that is compatible with the easement. For more information, visit www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestlegacy.

How to Apply

To learn more or to request a Forest Stewardship Plan, contact your local DNR Forestry office (see page 4) or the Private Forest Program Coordinator at 651-297-4467. Or fill out an application online at www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/forms/wdstew_form.html.

Financial Assistance

A variety of cost-share, loan, and grant programs are available through the DNR and other agencies to provide financial support for landowners interested in improving their forest management practices. For more information contact your local DNR Forestry office (see page 4).

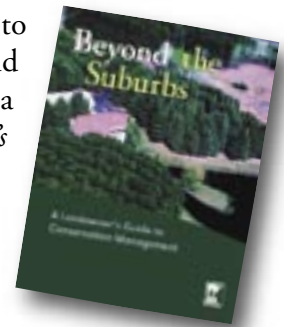
Under the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA), a program was created that offers an incentive payment to landowners who enroll 20 or more acres of contiguous forest land for eight or more years, have a forest stewardship plan in place, and agree to use the Voluntary Site-Level Timber Harvesting and Forest Management Guidelines (see page 38). For more information go to www.cnr.umn.edu/cfc/nryb/nrr/SFIA_NRR.pdf.

Sustainable Woodlands

The Sustainable Woodlands Program, established in 1997 by the Minnesota Forestry Association and Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, pays up to 65 percent of the costs of projects to improve the value of forest land for uses such as habitat, recreation, aesthetics, and forest products production. Private landowners with 20 to 1,000 acres of eligible land may apply for assistance through the program.

Less than 20?

Eligibility for the Forest Stewardship Plan program is limited to landowners with 20 or more acres of land. If you own less land than that but would still like to learn how you can develop a plan to manage it, check out *Beyond the Suburbs: A Landowner's Guide to Conservation Management*. Download a copy of this informative 64-page guide at www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry (look under Tree Care and Management) or contact the DNR Information Center (651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367) for information on purchasing a copy.



Public Partners

In addition to advising individual landowners, we also help county and city governments manage the timberland they own. Timber sales are an important source of income for a number of northern Minnesota counties. When requested, we assist with administration, inventories, and interpreting aerial photos. This helps ensure that these land managers have access to current information and expertise needed to manage forests well.