

# Green Timber Tree Farm Group



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## Michigan Forest Facts

- Michigan's forest products industry accounts for 154,000 jobs and generates \$12 billion in revenue annually
- The annual timber harvest in Michigan would produce a pile of wood 8 feet long by 4 feet tall by 3,500 miles wide. Annual growth produces a pile 8 feet long by 4 feet tall by 8,000 miles wide.

## FROM THE GROUP MANAGER:

The Green Timber Tree Farm Group has continued its trend of steady growth through 2010, a year in which we have enrolled six new properties totaling an addition of 1,005 acres to the group. I am pleased with the continued interest in the group and am hopeful that as the group grows, the benefits our members receive will be enhanced.

Tree Farm Group members are among an elite class of private non-industrial landowners who display a great commitment to their investment, forestland and in many cases, their family. As in the past, our group members have continued to take an active role in the management of their forests. Many of our members have conducted forest management activities aimed at meeting a number of different objectives. Forest management activities that have taken place on group member properties over the past year include:

- Individual tree selection harvests aimed at improving forest health, quality and productivity.
- Aspen clearcuts designed to increase wildlife habitat.
- Salvage harvest aimed at utilizing dying white spruce and balsam fir affected by an outbreak of the spruce budworm.
- Tree plantings designed to increase forest diversity, wildlife habitat and disease resistance.

As many of you know from past correspondence, the adaptation of the American Forest Foundation's 2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability have led to changes in the operation of our Tree Farm Group. Two primary revisions to the old Standards of Sustainability include the requirements of a more detailed forest management plan and more frequent third party audits of the group. The frequency and in-

tensity of the third party audits has resulted in increased operational costs for the group. In an effort to help offset some of these heightened costs, we have made adaptations to group operations, which are now in effect. These changes include:

- Green Timber Tree Farm Group annual dues have been increased from \$40.00 to \$50.00 per year.
- We will now provide a one year subscription to the Tree Farmer magazine for new group members but will be unable to provide a yearly subscription to all members.
- As an added benefit, we will provide one free hour of forestry consultation service per year for each group member if requested, a \$50.00 value.

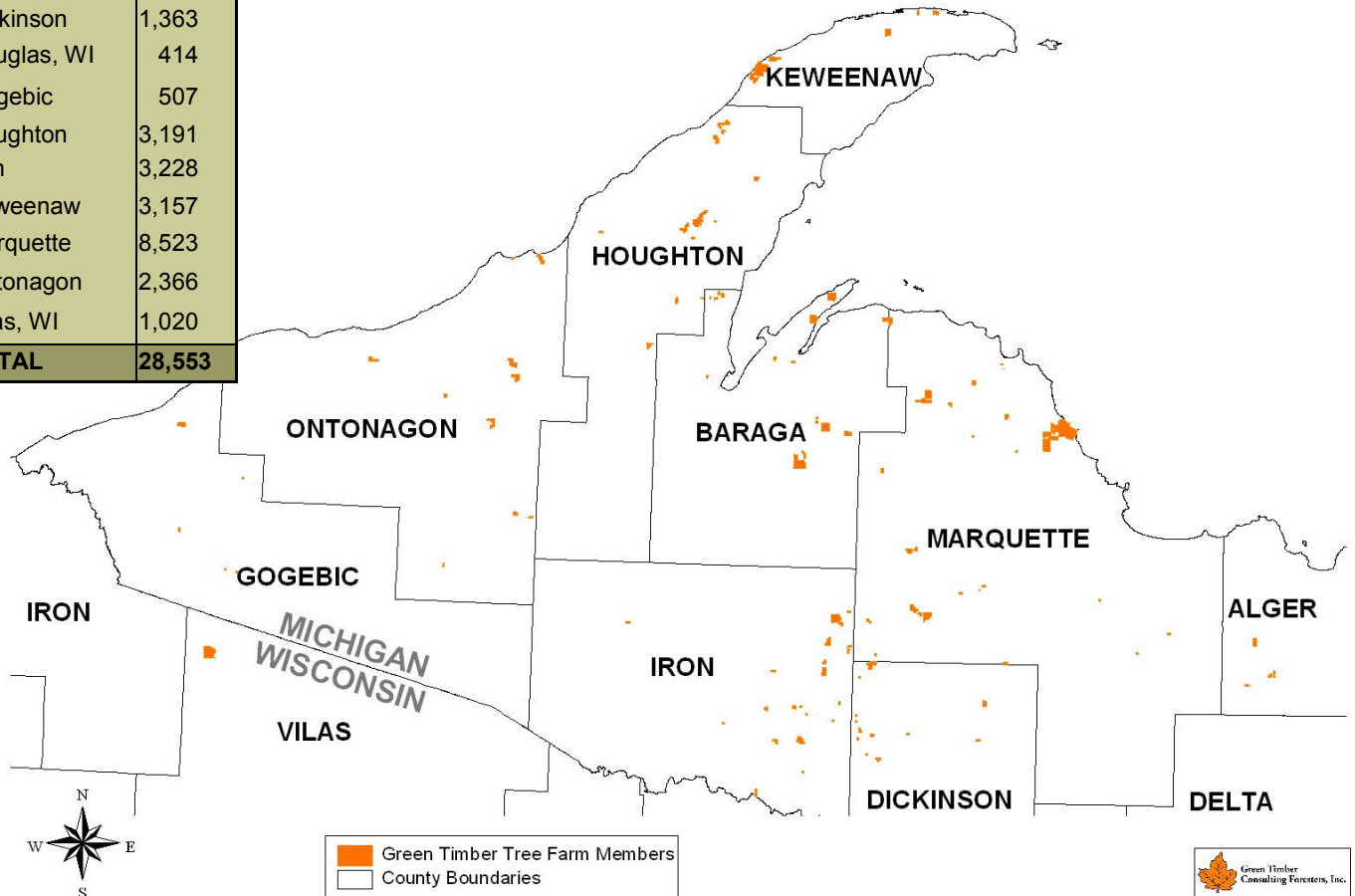
Last spring our tree farm group underwent the first audit adhering to the new 2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability. Consistent with past performance, this audit went very smoothly. All properties visited were found to meet or exceed the standards. As we prepare for this spring's surveillance audit, I expect more smooth sailing.

As we move forward into 2011 we plan to aggressively promote our tree farm group to attract new members. Attracting new members will help defer the cost of operating the group, thus leading to added benefits for each individual group member. We value your commitment to the Green Timber Tree Farm Group and look forward to continued success of the group come.



# GREEN TIMBER TREE FARM GROUP PROPERTIES LOCATED IN ELEVEN COUNTIES IN MICHIGAN AND WISCONSIN

County	Acres
Alger	607
Baraga	4,177
Dickinson	1,363
Douglas, WI	414
Gogebic	507
Houghton	3,191
Iron	3,228
Keweenaw	3,157
Marquette	8,523
Ontonagon	2,366
Vilas, WI	1,020
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28,553</b>



Tree Farm Group member Don Salo standing next to a large white pine on his property



John and Kristine Niemela, 2009 Upper Peninsula Tree Farmers of the Year

## SUGAR MAPLE DECLINE

One of the most abundant components of our region's northern hardwoods forest type is sugar maple. The tree is a very valuable resource to the forest products industry in our area and other parts of the country. The UP is close to the northern limit of the species' natural geographic range, which spans west to central Minnesota, south to Tennessee, north to southern Ontario and Quebec, and east to Maine and New Brunswick. In the past, sugar maple has experienced some areas of sporadic yet widespread decline throughout its range. Past occurrences of maple decline in the 1950's, 70's and 80's have all basically pointed to severe drought and/or events of defoliation caused by peaks in the cycles of forest defoliators. Over the past couple of decades, studies in the eastern United States have focused more on soil nutrients and the effects of acid rain on the decline.

More recently, unusual levels of maple decline have been observed in the western UP along with other areas of the upper Midwest. For any tree species, decline can be described as, "reduced growth and increased mortality". In sugar maple, the decline is usually detected when dieback is observed near the top of the tree. Dieback is basically branch mortality that begins in the fine twigs near the end of the branch and progresses toward the base of the branch. Typically, this symptom is easier to observe in leaf-off conditions. Another early sign of decline is unusually small leaf size which increases the amount of light that passes through parts of the tree's crown. Color changes of leaves in the summer months can also be an early indicator of stress and decline.

Currently, with the noticeable maple decline occurring more locally, Michigan Technological University is conducting research to find out what may be causing the decline of sugar maple. 120 maple decline research plots have been established throughout the western UP. Factors taken into consideration with the research plots include: measurements for tree productivity and vigor, nutrient content of the soil and past management practices of the area. Monitoring of these plots has indicated a 14 percent dieback occurrence overall (Bal, et al., 2011). These areas of dieback appear to be confined to relatively

small groups of trees which suggest the dieback is driven by a more local factor. There appears to be a correlation between soil nutrient availability and dieback occurrence, but there is not enough evidence to pinpoint that as the cause. Complete analysis and conclusions of this study are projected to be available in fall/winter of 2012-13. In fact, a recent study in New Hampshire concluded that calcium deficiency due to acid deposition or acid rain caused sugar maple decline (Juice, 2006). Since the late 1990's the Midwest has had more drought years than normal so that could also be a contributing factor.

From a forest management standpoint, the severity of the maple dieback, potential loss of value and encouragement of diversity should be considered when implementing timber harvests. Research suggests that if there is less than 30 percent crown dieback in an individual tree, it may have a chance of recovering (Minocha, 1999) and should be monitored as much as possible. Of course, some dieback is normal, but if approximately 10 percent or more of a stand is showing these symptoms, it could be an unhealthy situation (Bal, et al., 2011). Nutrient treatment of soil in some areas has proved to be beneficial to maple crowns and overall growth and vigor. This is an option to explore if the soil is found to be deficient in certain nutrients. Whatever the cause, the dieback has been reported to progress very fast, so if an area is suspected to be suffering from maple decline, it is best to monitor the stand closely.

### References:

Bal, Tara L., Andrew J. Storer, Martin F. Jurgensen, Dana L. Richter, Michael C. Amacher. Evaluation of sugar maple dieback in the Great Lakes Region. Michigan Chapter of Society of American Foresters Meeting, St. Ignace, MI March, 2011.

Minocha, R. Sugar maple ecology and health: proceedings of an international symposium. June 2-4, 1999, Warren, PA, USDA Forest Service Gen.Tech.Rep. NE-261, 1999.

Juice, S.M., Fahey, T.J., Siccama, T.G., et al. 2006. Response of Sugar Maple to calcium addition to northern hardwood forest. Ecology. 87: 1267-1280.



*"Another early sign of decline is unusually small leaf size which increases the amount of light that passes through parts of the tree's crown. ."*

### Celebrate Forests!

2011 has been named the International Year of Forests by the United Nations. The specific aim of this designation is to raise global awareness of the importance of forests to everyone. Speaking to Tree Farmers about the benefits that forests provide is preaching to the choir, but not everyone is aware of the benefits yet. Pass the word on to your friends and neighbors; feel free to distribute copies of this newsletter to them. More information is available online at:

[www.celebrateforests.com](http://www.celebrateforests.com)

## SLOW ASH MORTALITY (SLAM)

The SLOW Ash Mortality or SLAM program has been developed as an effort to help slow the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) across the UP. While researchers agree that completely eradicating EAB from the UP would be nearly impossible, there are still benefits to slowing its spread. Slowing the spread of EAB will benefit private landowners by giving them more time to prepare for the arrival of the pest and to take actions that limit their property's ability to harbor the insect. Money has been set aside through the Forest Stewardship Program for landowners who own property with a significant amount of ash. This funding is to be used for the preparation of a forest management plan, which will educate landowners on EAB and ways to prepare for its arrival. These extra Forest Stewardship funds have been designated solely for landowners owning property located outside of the EAB quarantine areas, (Houghton County is currently the only quarantined area in the central and western UP.) which contain a component of ash. Once the landowner

has a completed Forest Stewardship Plan, they will have the tools necessary to conduct management that will help deter the spread of EAB.

The main objective for managing ash in a forest for the preparation of EAB invasion is to reduce the amount of food for its larval stage. EAB larvae feed on the living tissue of ash trees creating tunnels called "galleries." These galleries disrupt the flow of water and nutrients from the tree's root system to the crown and vice versa. This disruption of nutrient flow is what ultimately kills the trees. Research has shown that the more ash phloem available in an area, the higher the chances of that area harboring and spreading EAB. Reducing the amount of ash phloem available to the insect greatly reduces its chance to establish new populations and spread into new areas. The most effective way to reduce the amount of ash phloem in a forest is through timber harvesting. Preliminary guidelines indicate that the amount of ash in a stand should be reduced to roughly ten percent of the stand's over-

all stocking. It is recommended that the majority of large ash trees be harvested since they contain drastically more phloem than smaller trees and thus have the ability to harbor larger populations of EAB. Harvesting the larger trees will also benefit the landowner in capturing the value of the trees before they become infested with EAB. Reducing the available feeding sites in a forest for EAB will drastically inhibit their ability to spread to new areas, thus giving researchers more time to study the insect and possibly develop effective means of control.

More information on EAB and the SLAM project can found at [www.slameab.info](http://www.slameab.info).



Adult Emerald Ash Borer Beetle

### NRCS COST SHARING PROGRAMS AID FOREST LANDOWNERS

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a relatively new program developed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The goal of this program is to "encourage resource producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner". This is done over a five year contract period by using financial incentives to encourage landowners to undertake new conservation activities as well as manage, maintain, and improve existing activities. Some of these activities include:

- Prescribed burning and wildfire reduction activities
- Constructing or enhancing shallow water habitat
- Maintaining or enhancing riparian forest buffers for wildlife habitat
- Forest stand improvement for wildlife habitat and soil quality
- Installing, maintaining or enhancing wildlife corridors and forest wildlife structures
- Restoration and management of rare or declining habitats
- Sustainable management of non-timber forest plants
- Crop tree release
- Patch harvesting
- Protection of cultural resources
- Non-chemical treatments for brush, weeds and invasive species
- Participating in pilot programs

Instead of individual activities, forest landowners choose a "bundle" (group of pre-chosen enhancements applicable to the property) that addresses resource issues as a whole. An example would be the forest enhancement bundle number two, including activities such as: forest stand improvement for wildlife, hardwood crop tree release, riparian forest buffer management, installation of forest wildlife structures and restoration of rare and declining habitat. By selecting a "bundle", landowners receive an increase in ranking for program eligibility as well as a higher potential payment for the activities completed.

## AN EYE ON THE MARKET: WELCOMED STABILITY

The past twelve months have been a time of timber market stability, which we have welcomed with open arms. In addition to stability, we have experienced a heightened interest in the forest products generated from species which have been historically undesirable such as spruce and fir.

Timber market demands helped to deliver respectable stumpage prices which proved to be stable throughout 2010 and into the first quarter of 2011. Over the past year, Green Timber Consulting Foresters, Inc. assisted a number of our clients (many of whom are Green Timber Tree Farm Group members) with timber sale preparation, contracting and administration,

which generated a total of \$721,000 in stumpage (revenue to the landowner). This stumpage revenue included approximately 1,000,000 board feet of hardwood sawtimber/veneer and 20,100 cords of mixed species pulpwood/boltwood.

We have realized a 16.2 percent increase in stumpage prices achieved for our clients throughout the past twelve months. Comparing these prices with the reported market of our region, Green Timber Consulting Foresters, Inc. has continued to beat the average stumpage rates on properties that we manage.



*"Green Timber Consulting Foresters, Inc. has continued to beat the average stumpage rates on properties that we manage"*

### NRCS Cost Sharing Programs continued

The NRCS has developed a checklist for landowners debating whether the CSP program is right for them, it is available at their website, [www.nrcs.gov](http://www.nrcs.gov). Some questions are as follows: "Are you willing to commit time to inventory and document your conservation activities and production system to determine eligibility and ranking?" and "Are you ready to enter into a five year contract requiring you to apply additional conservation activities and to improve, maintain and manage existing conservation activities?"

Additionally, there is a checklist of four questions and if the landowner answers yes to two or more of them, they may be a good candidate for the CSP program. These questions are:

- Is your land "certified by one of the following recognized programs: Tree Farm System, Green Tag, Smart Wood, Forest Stewardship Council or Sustainable Forestry Initiative?
- Have one or more improvements been made to your forest/woodland in the past 10 years according to a written forest management or stewardship plan that was prepared with assistance from a certified licensed natural resource professional? Examples may

include prescribed thinning, tree planting, establishing a firebreak, etc.

- Are all roads, skid trails, landings and burned or harvested areas free from apparent erosion?
- Are native trees appropriately stocked on the property (temporary exemptions apply for areas being reforested) and is wildfire risk (in wildfire-prone areas) is minimized?

A method of meeting these requirements would be to have a stewardship plan prepared by a professional forester, follow its recommendations, and enroll in the Green Timber Tree Farm Group. In addition to the above requirements, in order to enroll in CSP the landowner or entity must receive a non-farm income of less than \$1,000,000 per year and the lands must not already be enrolled in a similar NRCS program such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). The landowner must schedule, install and adopt at least one new enhancement within the first fiscal year after the plan is signed and complete all scheduled enhancements within the first three fiscal years of the contract. Recent estimates indicate forest landowners could make between six and twelve dollars per acre each year with higher amounts going to landowners selecting bundles and performing more enhancements. The maximum yearly amount for individuals or a single entity is

\$40,000 per year and \$200,000 over the five year contract; joint operations can receive \$80,000 yearly and \$400,000 over five years.

If a landowner meets the program requirements and would like to enroll in CSP, the first step is to fill out the Conservation Stewardship Program Application from the NRCS website and submit it to their local NRCS office. The landowner will then work with NRCS field personnel to complete a resource inventory which will evaluate the conservation performance of existing and additional conservation activities. These are then scored using a point-based system to determine ranking and payment. Landowners will also receive higher ranking if they are addressing issues that their state has deemed to be of extra importance. All eligible land under the applicant's control must be enrolled in the program.

[The NRCS office for Keweenaw, Houghton, Baraga, and Ontonagon counties is located at 16403 Ojibwa Industrial Park Road, Baraga, MI, and can be reached at (906)353-8225. The office for Marquette and Alger counties is located at 780 Commerce Drive, Marquette, MI, and can be contacted at (906)226-9460. The office for Dickinson, Iron and Gogebic counties is located at 102 North Hooper Street, Kingsford, MI and can be reached at (906) 774-1550.]

## TIES TO THE LAND WORKSHOP IN THE UPPER PENINSULA

Last year we included an article about the “Ties to the Land” workshops, workbook and DVD produced by the Oregon State University Extension. These materials are designed to aid private landowners in preparing for the transition of property ownership to the next generation.

Green Timber Consulting Foresters is currently helping to organize a “Ties to the Land” workshop to be held in the U. J. Noblet Forestry & Wood Products Building on the campus of **Michigan Technological University in Houghton, Michigan**. The tentative dates are currently **Saturday, September 17, 2011**, and **Friday, September 30, 2011**. This is a two-part workshop and attendance at both sessions is highly recommended in order to get the most from the program. More information will follow this newsletter as plans are finalized. You can also contact our office if you have questions about the workshop or “Ties to the Land.”



*“Succession planning and intergenerational transfer are essential, but often overlooked components of estate planning, especially for family forest owners and land-based businesses.*”

*Ties to the Land offers resources to guide family forest landowners through a smooth transition of their forest land from one generation to the next.”*

## HISTORY AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

From legends of the Ontonagon Boulder to the Quincy Mine Hoist in Hancock, the UP has a rich history. Prehistoric groups, Native Americans and Europeans were drawn to this area by its seemingly limitless supply of resources. In their quest for these resources, each group has left its own unique mark on the landscape of this region. By this point you may be wondering what this article has to do with tree farming and sustainable forestry. The American Forest Foundation (AFF) Standards for Sustainability specifically mention the protection of special sites in Standard 7. This standard states, “Special sites are managed in ways that recognize their unique historical, archeological, cultural, geological, biological or ecological characteristics.”

What constitutes a “special site” and how can a Tree Farmer identify and/or manage one? The special sites that we usually think of and encounter in the UP include evidence of past copper mining, remnants of old logging or hunting camps and Native American sites. Special sites may also include things like artesian wells, waterfalls, natural rock formations and groups of rare plants. A special site may even be a particular tree or scenic location to which the landowner has become attached.

The diversity of special sites necessitates a broad range of practices that may be necessary to manage and/or protect them. Special sites must be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Typically this involves including details about the site in a forest management plan. Forest management recommendations, especially those that may affect a special site should specifically detail the steps required to ensure a site is adequately protected. Some examples include: completely excluding timber harvesting within one tree-length of an old building to prevent accidental damage by falling limbs, restricting the location of roads and skid trails to preserve a possible burial site or designating special trees for retention before a stand is marked. If a special site is relatively inconspicuous, you may also choose to keep its location private in order to prevent intentional exploitation or accidental damage by “explorers”.

If you haven’t already done so, next time your management plan is due for revision or the next time you prepare for a timber harvest, you should make sure that your forester knows about the special sites on your property. One final way to help protect special sites across the UP is to respect such sites when using public lands and lands enrolled in the Commercial Forest Act (CFA). Laws prohibit the gathering of artifacts on state and federal lands without a permit. Additionally, prospecting and gathering artifacts are not permissible uses of lands enrolled in CFA.

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