

Multi-Phase Forest Legacy Project Largest in Michigan

Nearly a Quarter Million Acres Conserved

The Challenge

Forests dominate Michigan's landscape, covering over half of the land. About two thirds of this forested land is privately owned. In the Upper Peninsula, State and Federal governments and forest industry corporations are the primary landowners. The timber industry contributes 150,000 jobs and \$12 billion annually to Michigan's economy.

Many corporate lands across the Upper Peninsula are being sold to financially-driven buyers such as timber investment management organizations. Forested lands are also being subdivided and sold. This change in land ownership could severely impact timber, tourism, and recreation industries, the backbone of the region's economy.

The Solution

The Heartwood Forest Land Group acquired several hundred thousand acres of Upper Peninsula forestland from the Kamehameha Schools. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) approached the Group about placing a conservation easement on a large portion of the acquired land. The two parties formed a partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources called the Northern Great Lakes Forest project. They leveraged private, State, and Federal funds to protect nearly 248,000 acres in several easements stretching across the Upper Peninsula.

The U.S. Forest Service State and Private Forestry Northeastern Area Forest Legacy Program provided \$9.47 million for the multi-phase project. A state fund, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, provided \$3.54 million. The overall non-Federal cost share for the combined phases of the conservation easements were \$13.98 million.

Resulting Benefits

The new easements, now part of a network of lands that stretch across two million acres, represent the largest

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A small scenic glimpse of the several hundred thousand acres of forestland conserved in Michigan through the easement.

protected wildlife corridor in the Midwest. It includes more than 300 natural lakes, 192 miles of Class I trout streams, and more than 52,000 acres of wetlands. It connects to parcels already protected by TNC and State and Federal government agencies. It provides critical buffers and protects in-holdings to Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park, Tahquamenon Falls State Park, and Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. The easements allow permanent public access for snowmobiling, hunting, fishing, hiking, and other recreation. Due to the project's substantial size, the working forest easements make an important contribution to protecting forest industry jobs and tourism in the Upper Peninsula.

Sharing Success

The public and private partnership involved in the Northern Great Lakes Forest Legacy project conserved forest land that has national as well as local significance.

Federal and State governments, the conservation community, major philanthropic foundations, and the timber industry all made important contributions to this project. The Northern Great Lakes Forest project is the first of its kind in Michigan and serves as a model of what can be accomplished together.



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