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Land Use and the Small Landowner  
Michigan State University  
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Natural Resources Series  
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# LAND USE

## *and the private northern Michigan landowner*

### An Informal Short Course for Owners of Forest, Recreation, and Wildlife Land

The demands on land throughout Michigan are changing. The competition between different uses for land is becoming more intense, and the costs of owning land are increasing. All of this will have a strong bearing on the ownership and management of land in the immediate years ahead. It is the purpose of this course to provide owners of forest, recreation, and wildlife land with information that will help them make better land use decisions.

#### **Some Land Use Trends**

A look at the present land use situation in the northern portion of the state shows some obvious trends. Outdoor recreation, including hunting and fishing, has become the major use of land. This new and growing use of land areas is making new demands on land resources.

Farming continues as an important land use, but uses considerably less of the total land area than it did three decades ago.

Forestry has been growing and the consumption of wood products continues to increase. Promising regrowth now covers vast areas of once burned and cut-over land. Intensified forest management is now possible, with resulting benefits to wildlife, woods, recreation and aesthetics.

One of the largest groups of land owners in Michigan are the small private groups of land owners. In northern Michigan, they total about 55,000 owners. As a group, they own 63% of the forest land in the area. Recent studies indicate that they are a diverse group. They include wage earners, business and professional people, farmers, loggers, housewives, hunters and many others.

#### **Management Opportunities**

Opportunities exist to manage most small forests and other wild land areas for greater enjoyment and value. These values include timber, wildlife, water, minerals, recreation, scenery and others. At present, very few forest land owners apply management practices to their land. For example, a recent sampling of owners in northern Michigan showed that 39% had completed reforestation, 19% carried out forest improvements, and only 16% had harvested timber products. Management for other purposes such as fish and game was also quite limited.

Environmental considerations in managing land have taken on increasing importance in recent years. Proper attention to soil, water and the aesthetic aspects of land ownership are included in this short course.

#### **The Challenge**

In this period of rapid land use change the land owner has both opportunities and responsibilities. Through sound planning and management he can obtain greater personal benefits and enjoyment from his land. Efficient use of his land can also benefit the economy and general public.

#### **COURSE OUTLINE**

The course consists of four class meetings, each two hours in length. Classes meet once a week. Course contents are:

##### **First Meeting**

- Topics:** Forests in Michigan  
Soil and water — the basis of land use  
A. Present forest land use

- B. What is soil?
- C. Soil maps
- D. Soil and forests
- E. Land use and water quality

### Second Meeting

**Topic:** Managing your forests for timber and wildlife

- A. Major timber types
- B. Timber cutting practices for different kinds of forests
- C. Reforestation practices
- D. Managing land for wildlife and forests

### Third Meeting

**Topic:** Wildlife management on your land

- A. Plant succession and wildlife
- B. Wildlife habitat management techniques

### Fourth Meeting

**Topics:** Law affecting land use; Timber, sale contracts, Assistance programs for small owners

- A. Property tax assessments
- B. Trespass laws — rights of landowners
- C. Timber sale contracts
- D. Assistance programs for landowners

### Instructors

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## NATURAL RESOURCES

Each year offers new opportunities for the use of land and its resources to satisfy the needs of a changing and growing society. We now recognize that our supply of land, fresh air, clean water, agricultural soils, and many other natural resources are not unlimited. The demand for the use of land for new homes, industrial sites, shopping centers, service industries, farms, forest industries, recreation areas, open spaces, hunting and fishing areas and many other purposes will continue to make planning, management and regulatory responsibilities more important and more necessary.

### FORESTRY AND FOREST PRODUCTS

More than 50 percent of all land in Michigan is covered with forests. In northern Michigan from 72

to 95 percent of each of the counties is forested. The 19 million acres of forest land in Michigan supports a wood-using industry that produces about 750 million dollars worth of manufactured products each year. In addition, forests provide protection for land, water, and wildlife, while creating an environment in which man can work and play.

## FISH AND WILDLIFE

Hunting, angling and closely associated activities are among the most popular outdoor activities. Hunters and anglers spend about 250 million dollars per year in Michigan. There is need for improvement in the management and use of our fish and game resources through intensive application of technical knowledge.

## LAND AND WATER

Soils are basic to land use decisions. They directly affect the suitability of areas for farms, forests, recreational or wildlife uses. The ever-increasing demands citizens make on land means they must be more informed and responsible. In the final analysis, it is the people who use the land who must make the decisions as to how well it will be used.

Water is a common denominator that ties together all of man's interests. On its journey from watershed to sea it will affect fishing downstream, recreation on a manmade lake, irrigation on a valley farm, flood damage in a community, the quality of water for industry, and the safeness of that water for human use.

## TOURISM AND RECREATION

Michigan is recognized as a "Great Lake State." An abundance of natural resources help make it an expanding vacation land. With super highways, higher incomes, and shorter work weeks we can expect many times more people to demand vacation and recreation opportunities in the coming years. The present yearly value of the tourism industry exceeds the billion dollar mark.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Resource Development begins with people. There is a need to recognize and understand their relationship and personal responsibility to their surroundings — their ecological environment — and to know and recognize the social and economic forests that share the environment with them.

Aware of these inter-relationships and balances, men can identify and define the problems affecting the community and cooperatively work on solutions to these problems.