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Land Use and the Small Landowner
Michigan State University
Cooperative Extension Service
Natural Resources Series
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LAND USE

and the small landowner

An Informal Short Course for Owners of Small Forests and Other Wild Land

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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 wild land and small forests (5,000 acres or less in size) 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 state shows some obvious trends. Farming continues as a major land use, but uses considerably less of the total land area now than it did three decades ago. Forestry has experienced a resurgence, with promising regrowth now covering vast areas of once burned and cut-over land. Outdoor recreation, including hunting and fishing, has become a major business that is making new demands on our land resources. A recent study showed that in 1950 there were 500,000 acres of privately owned recreation land in Michigan. By 1960 this figure had increased to 1,000,000 acres. Projections indicate it will reach 5,500,000 by the year 1980.

One of the largest groups of land owners in Michigan are the small private forest owners. They total about 175,000 in number. As a group they own about one-sixth of the land area of the state, and nearly a third of the forest land. Recent studies of most of the small forest owners in the state indicate that they are a diverse group. They include wage earners, business and professional people, loggers, housewives, hunters and many others.

Management Opportunities

Opportunities exist to manage most small forests and other wild land areas for greater value or any number of products. These include timber, wildlife, water, minerals, recreation, scenery and others. At present very few forest land owners apply any management practices to their land. For example, a recent sampling of owners in northern Michigan showed that only 13 percent had

done any reforestation, only 6 percent any forest improvement, and only 25 percent sold any timber. Management for other purposes, such as game production, is also quite limited.

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 community and state. The wise use of land today and the future is a challenge to Michigan's small forest owners.

COURSE OUTLINE

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

First Meeting

Topic: Soil and water — the basis of land use

- A. What is soil?
- B. Soils maps and their use
- C. Soils and forest growth
- D. Water rights and responsibilities
- E. The growing use and competition for water.

Second Meeting

Topic: Managing your land for timber and wildlife

- A. Managing present forest stands
- B. Timber cutting practices for different kinds of forests
- C. Reforestation practices
- D. Forest practices and other factors affecting wildlife populations
- E. Managing land for deer, small game and recreation.

Third Meeting

Topic: Laws affecting land use; timber sales contracts

- A. The ad-valorem tax law
- B. The Commercial Forest Reserve Act
- C. State and federal laws providing payments in lieu of land taxes
- D. Timber sales contracts
- E. Laws relating to fishing, hunting, trapping, water pollution and other land uses.

Fourth Meeting

Topic: Assistance programs for small land owners

- A. U.S. Department of Agriculture programs — Soil Conservation Service, Farmers Home Administration, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Extension Service, and the Forest Service.
- B. Other Federal programs — Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Department of Commerce, and Department of the Interior.
- C. Michigan Department of Conservation Programs
- D. Private programs — Michigan Tree Farm Program, Recreation Associations, Tourist Associations, etc.

Instructors

Upper Peninsula

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A game management specialist
Public agency and organization representatives

Lower Peninsula

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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 some kind of forest growth. In northern Michigan

and in the Upper Peninsula 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 750 million dollars worth of manufactured products each year. In addition, forests provide protection for land, water, 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 man-made 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 the "Water-Winter Wonderland." 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 is approaching the billion dollar mark.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Resource Development begins with people. They must be helped to recognize and understand their relationship and personal responsibility to their surroundings — their ecological environment — and to know and recognize the social and economic forces 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.