

Private Forest Management in the Changing Northwoods

This project is an investigation of how private land owners view and manage forests in response to changing conditions in the Northwoods. We seek to better understand shifts in forest management and land use practices that may occur in the region in coming years, and the implications those shifts may have on land owners' access to goods and services from forests and the health of Northwoods overall. Our goal is to inform policies and programs that aim to help private forestland owners adapt to changing environmental and socio-economic conditions.

The Northwoods, including the forests of northern Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, are expected to undergo substantial changes over the next half century. In addition to continued development and economic pressures, increasing wildfires, pests and diseases, and extreme weather events are expected across the region. While several studies have examined the causes of these changes, few studies have examined how private forestland owners may be affected. In the Northwoods, private forestland owners own more than half of all forestland and represent a highly diverse group. The ways these owners adjust their management and land use practices to overcome challenges and take advantage of opportunities will have bearing on the long-term sustainability of the goods and services that the Northwoods provide.

Dr. Paige Fischer is directing this research project to learn more about private forest landowners and how they may adjust their management practices in response to changes in the Northwoods. This spring, summer and fall, her team of faculty and students from the University of Michigan will be conducting group interviews and surveys with private landowners in selected areas that have already experienced substantial stress (e.g. beech bark disease). The objectives of these research activities is to understand:

1. Land owners' expectations around future forest changes, and their perspectives on their associated risks and opportunities.
2. Forest changes and their implications for.
3. Land owners' adjustments in forest management and land use practices in response to these changes.
4. Land owners' motivations and capacities to reduce adverse effects and take advantage of new opportunities by adjusting their practices.

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