



MICHIGAN  
**FOREST  
PRODUCTS**  
COUNCIL

## **GUEST COLUMN: 'ANTI-BIODIVERSITY' BILL JEOPARDIZES MICHIGAN'S FORESTS, LAKES, NATIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS**

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When it comes to Michigan's natural resources, no one cares more for protecting these precious resources more than us. In the forest products industry, we have much at stake when it comes to the health of the forest—our work is there, but so are our homes, families, and communities in which we live. Many of us in the forest products business are multi-generational family-run small businesses. Sixty-five percent of Michigan's forestland is privately owned. Our quality of life is rooted in the health of Michigan forest. Good forest management leads to healthier forests.

Recent public conversation about biodiversity and Senate Bill 78, sponsored by State Senator Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba), has lost sight of the bill's compelling benefits. This legislation aids all stakeholders to come to the table to determine where the special places important to biodiversity stewardship are and how the state can enhance and tailor management activities.

Through access to Michigan's resources we can carefully manage of invasive species, infested and diseased trees, aid forest diversity, expand habitat, and protect endangered species. Forest management and sustainable harvests not only maximize economic value, but enhance species biodiversity and ecological value.

The key to good forest management is stewardship. Our forefathers came to this land for access to its vast resources. Are we smarter about how we use and care for those resources than in last generations? Absolutely. That is the legacy of any generation and the evolution of any human activity. We will continue to work towards the most environmentally responsible practices possible. Michigan Forest Products Council member, Plum Creek, has been a leader in protecting and enhancing habitat for threatened and endangered species, especially the Kirtland warbler. The songbird makes its home in the U.P. when not in its native Bahamas. In the spring of 2009, foresters planted about 150,000 jack pine seedlings on the Yellow Dog Plains, northwest of Marquette, to create more habitat for the warbler.

We are doing more to promote species biodiversity in Michigan than we have ever done. In 2012, an independent study found there are over one million acres of federal, state, local and private land currently under significant protection. In addition, four million acres are guarded from the greatest threat to forestland of them all—commercial development.

A history of good stewardship has afforded us great opportunity. We are in a position now more than ever to put those resources to their best environmental, social and economic use. Finding common ground will be the key to continuing this tradition of sustaining the value of Michigan's resources for generations to come.

It is easy to become so focused on the things that divide us that we forget our commonalities in the bigger picture. We all want a strong economy, a roof over our head, recreational opportunities, quality air and water. We want to protect Michigan's forests.

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