

JANUARY 2023

MSU FORESTER



growing

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FROM THE department chair



Dear MSU Forestry Alumni and Friends,

As you will see in this issue, MSU Forestry is growing. To keep growing and improving, we recently engaged in strategic planning that identified four leadership pillars that will guide our priorities over the next five years:

- Grow forestry talent
- Empower natural climate solutions
- Develop sustainable bioproducts
- Create green resilience in communities

These pillars depend on a strong foundation of forestry skills and expertise and outstanding faculty and staff. Engagement and support from alumni propel our progress. Here are a few highlights on each pillar.

We are **growing forestry talent** with the largest incoming class of B.S. students in 40+ years (26 new students from diverse backgrounds) and the implementation of new educational programs from short courses to graduate studies. Dr. Asia Dowtin is offering a 9-day arboriculture short course in partnership with ISA – Michigan as an entry point to urban forestry. Dr. Justin Kunkle is leading a collaboration with MSU's Institute of Agricultural Technology to partner with Muskegon and Bay Community Colleges for two-year degrees, with the option of seamlessly transferring to MSU Forestry. Our hybrid-online, field-based Master's degree is off to a strong first year under the leadership of Dr. David Rothstein, Dr. Aki Koyama, and Mr. Jim Rivard. As you encounter talented future students, whether for short courses or grad studies, please send them our way!

We are **empowering natural climate solutions** through education, research, and outreach. Forest carbon is increasingly incorporated into our curriculum. Our graduate certificate in Forest Carbon Science, Policy, and Management, established in 2012, has enrolled scores of students. Many of our faculty pursue research related to forest carbon, with Dr. David Skole recently participating in COP27. Our Forest Carbon & Climate Program, under the direction of Ms. Lauren Cooper, is a leader in outreach and applied research to advance knowledge and implementation of climate-resilient forest

policy and management; the FCCP has reached thousands through a monthly webinar, now co-sponsored by SAF. Be sure to check out and spread the word about our leading strengths in forest carbon and climate.

We are **developing bioproducts** to ensure robust forest markets and climate-friendly sustainable products. Dr. Mojgan Nejad's research on lignin-based foams, adhesives and coatings attracts industry interest globally. Ms. Sandra Lupien, Director of MassTimber@MSU, a collaboration with the School of Planning, Design, and Construction and MSU Extension, is leading mass timber efforts in Michigan and beyond, leveraging MSU's award-winning mass timber STEM Facility. Student interest in our sustainable bioproducts minor is growing. Learn about our bioproducts efforts and help us connect with industry for win-win collaborations.

We are **creating green resilience** through expanding our urban and community forestry programs, led by Dr. Asia Dowtin. Student interest in the Urban and Community Forestry minor is strong. We are excited about a developing collaboration with MSU's C.S. Mott Dept. of Public Health that focuses on the health benefits of forests and green spaces. We also seek to reinvest in our urban wood recovery program, MSU Shadows. For those in the tree care industry, reach out to us to explore how we can collaborate.

Our growth has been aided by the tremendous generosity of our alumni and supporters in time, ideas, mentoring of students, and financial gifts. Thank you! I want to extend special gratitude to outgoing Forestry Alumni Association President Jason Darling ('08) for his leadership and board members Todd Johnson ('99) and Joyce Angel ('76). We really appreciate the FAA's energy in developing activities and events. Also, a warm welcome and thanks to Hilary Wells ('15) for serving as the new president and new members Doug Tamboer ('54), Don Johnson ('76), Jim Malloy ('05), and Emily Caretti ('17). Please contact me if you have any comments or are interested in giving back.

Cheers,
Rich



Alum Spotlight



“I celebrated my two-year anniversary working at the non-profit Friends of Grand Rapids Parks in March this year. As Community Forestry Project Manager, I work with our team and our local communities to assist in achieving their canopy goals. We did a big 200-tree planting event in the Southtown neighborhood this spring, with another 200 trees going in that neighborhood this fall.

We plant about 800 balled-and-burlaped trees each year, with some excellent diversity in species. When we're not planting, we're pruning, watering, and teaching our Neighborhood Forester classes to help residents better understand and care for their trees.”

Becky Pobst, BS '19

Updates

BS JERRY GILDEMEISTER

'55 My wife, Cathy, & I sold our home in La Grande, Oregon, a year ago, then endured 8 months of apartment living before finding a 55+ community home in Dallas, Oregon. So, it has been a busy year of moving and refurbishing/updating the new residence. The photography and design business has really slowed down the past year, but did manage to accommodate past clients with a new book production project as well as a sizable wall photo decor display project. Don't know what will be forthcoming, but looking forward to a New Year with fewer trials and tribulations.

BS JIM STARKEY

'89 I retired in January 2021 after a 20-year career with the USDA Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations. I served on the NF's in Alabama as a Patrol Captain, the Cherokee National Forest as a Special Agent, and ended my career as a Patrol Commander in the Southern Region supervising patrol enforcement operations on NFs in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee and the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area. Prior to 2001, I served 11 years with the US Army Military Police as a Major. I am a full time grandpa with four grandchildren living in Montevallo, Alabama.

BS STEVE MCCOLLUM

'71 I'm a 1971 graduate with a BS in Forestry. My father started Floral City Tree Service in 1950 after graduating in Forestry from MSU. I took over in 1980 and after 72 years, I sold the business to The Davey Tree Expert Company.

BS NICK SANCHEZ

'13 I am working as the Network Manager for the Old-Growth Forest Network and living in Chicago.

MS MARC ABRAMS

'79 Marc Abrams, professor of forest ecology and physiology and the Nancy and John Steimer Professor of Agricultural Sciences at Penn State, retired at the end of June 2022 as one of the world's leading forest ecologists.

PHD

'82

Over his 35-year career in the College of Agricultural Sciences, he has published 175 referred journal articles, and the journal PLOS One ranked him as the fifth most cited forest ecologist worldwide.

Abrams received the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award presented by The Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists, announced at the sixth annual Fire in Eastern Oak Forests Conference. He has given more than 100 invited talks at scientific meetings and seminar series, including over 50 international talks in more than 30 countries.

Largest Incoming Class in 40 Years

The MSU Forestry program is thriving, and our incoming class numbers show it. We have a record-breaking 26-person incoming class, and for the second time in history the class of first-year students consists of a majority of female students. As we continue to spread the word about our outstanding alumni and their worldwide reach and influence, we continue to grow the program, educating up-and-coming forestry professionals on their potential impact on our forests and the health of our environment.

First-year student Ryan Wallace joined the forestry program to learn more about the diversity of forestry studies and the impact those lessons can have on his world. "I am worried about forests in places like Brazil where rampant logging is highly detrimental and goes unhampered," said Wallace.

Wallace's favorite course so far has been Natural Resources Field Skills, where he has enjoyed learning practical skills, like how to use a chainsaw.

Katherine (Kat) Jones, an MSU Forestry legacy and first-year student, joined the program

hoping to gain a better understanding of the world around her and to be able to help preserve everything she loves about nature.

Jones's brother Benjamin graduated from MSU Forestry just last spring. "Being a legacy student in the forestry program, I figured I was probably more prepared than other people in the program, but I am finding myself absolutely swept away by how fast college can go," she said.

Dendrology, taught by Dr. David Rothstein, has been Jones's favorite course so far. "I absolutely love this class, I love learning how to identify things and learn about nature, so this really is the class for me," she said.

First-year student Wren Rojas, hailing from Chicago, is a first-generation college student and second-generation Mexican immigrant. Before arriving at MSU, Rojas attended Lake County College where he majored in Psychology. "I'm hoping that by studying forestry at MSU I'm able to have a bigger appreciation for our ecosystems and can learn more about how our forests help support us," said Rojas.

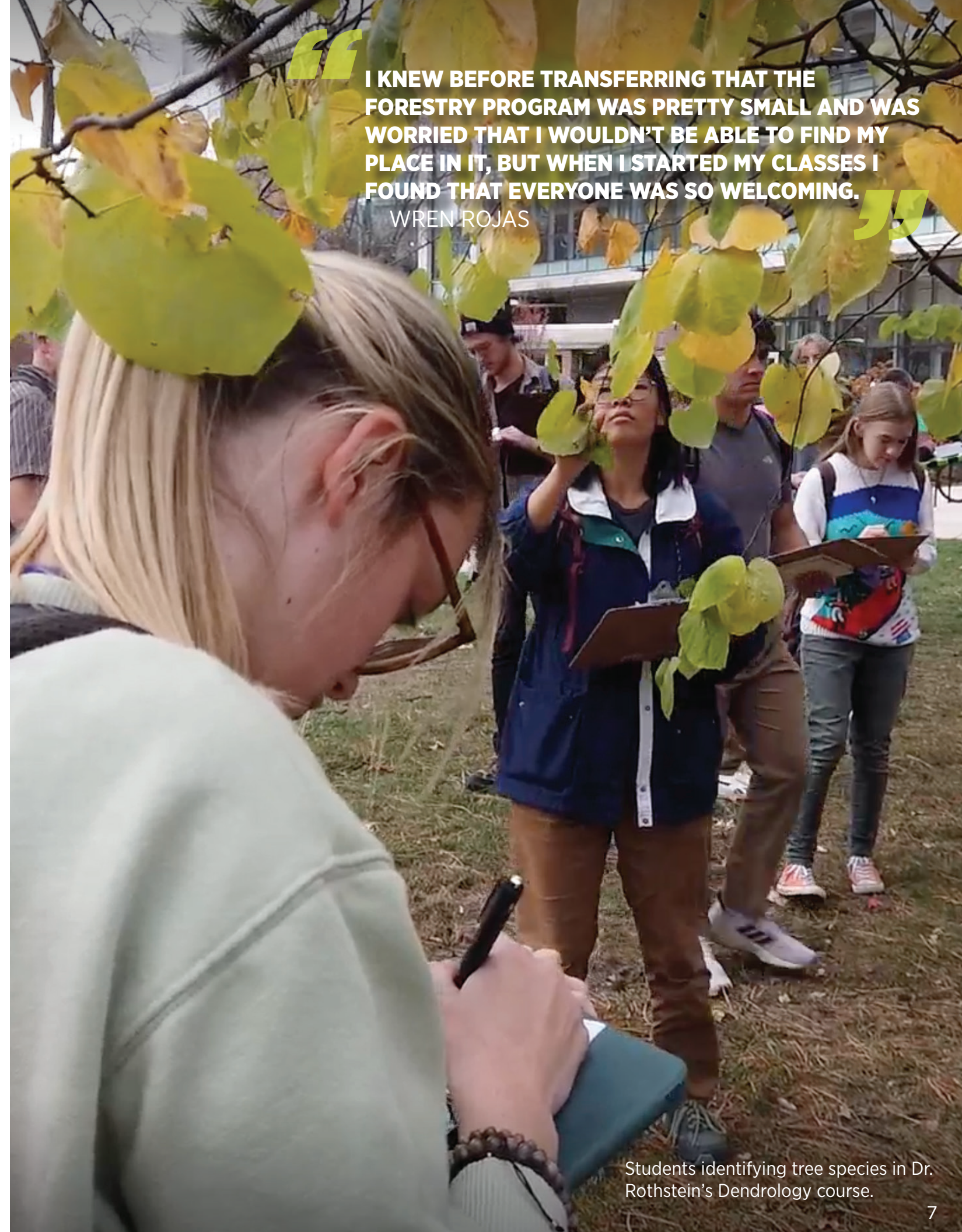
Rojas has particularly enjoyed Forest Vegetation with Dr. Rothstein. "I thought that the three-and-a-half-hour long labs would be a drag, but I love being able to walk around outside and learn about the trees that we see in our everyday lives," he said.

One thing that stands out for Rojas is the amount of support he has found in the forestry program. "I knew before transferring that the forestry program was pretty small and was worried that I wouldn't be able to find my place in it, but when I started my classes I found that everyone was so welcoming," he said.

As the forestry program continues to grow at MSU, faculty and staff are dedicated to providing educational and professional opportunities to our students that they may not see in other programs. Students in the program attend professional development opportunities, such as the SAF annual convention, and develop practical skills in the field and labs that prepare them for their future in the forestry world, however that may take shape.

"I KNEW BEFORE TRANSFERRING THAT THE FORESTRY PROGRAM WAS PRETTY SMALL AND WAS WORRIED THAT I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FIND MY PLACE IN IT, BUT WHEN I STARTED MY CLASSES I FOUND THAT EVERYONE WAS SO WELCOMING."

WREN ROJAS



Students identifying tree species in Dr. Rothstein's Dendrology course.

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

The department saw a number of notable achievements over the year. Research funding continues to grow as our world-class faculty expand projects in a variety of areas; annual gifts continue to allow for wonderful student opportunities; diversity remains a main focus of our program; major strides in mass timber awareness and support put MSU at the forefront of this growing industry trend; and our enrollment continues its steady increase.

RESEARCH FUNDING

\$4.1M



A few recently funded projects include Dr. David Skole's work with NASA on South Asian smallholder forests and other tree-based systems: synthesizing Land-Cover and Land-Use Change (LCLUC) data and approaches to foster a natural climate solution that improves livelihoods. Dr. Emily Huff received funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for the project A holistic approach to monitoring abrupt environmental shifts in the Kluane Lake region, and Dr. Raju Pokharel is working with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) on DNR Biomass Power Economic Analysis.

We continue to be grateful for the unwavering support of our incredible alums and sponsors, this year contributing \$209,150 in gifts. The department received 181 total gifts from 104 unique donors. This allows us to continue providing scholarships, field trips, and other highly valuable educational experiences to our students.

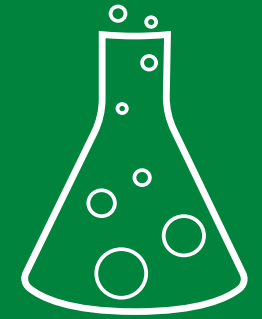
GIFTS FROM ALUMNI & SPONSORS

\$209K

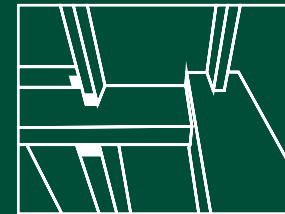


MSU Forestry remains focused on promoting diversity in our program, providing access for all. A partnership with Ecotek Lab provides opportunities for Detroit youth to pursue higher education careers in natural resources and sustainable bioproducts by bringing them right into Dr. Nejad's Green Bioproducts Science & Engineering Lab to conduct experiments and learn.

DIVERSITY



MASS TIMBER ACCOLADES



Mass timber outreach and education is rapidly growing across the forest products and building industry, and MSU is proud to be at the forefront of that rise. The STEM Teaching and Learning Facility on campus continues to receive acknowledgements for being a leader in the use of mass timber in Michigan, including being named the Most Significant Construction Project of 2021 by the Associated General Contractors of America.

ENROLLMENT



Enrollment on both undergraduate and graduate levels continues to hold strong, with students in the MS program doubling since 2021.

BS: 86 **MS:** 23 **PHD:** 22

Total enrollment: 131



FROM THE FAA president

Good day fellow foresters!

After several years of service, my time on the MSU Forestry Alumni Association is coming to an end.... for now. I served six years on the FAA Board, the last two years as president. I have learned and grown so much over my time here with the Association. My connection with and dedication to the university has never been stronger. I always knew I would be somewhat involved with MSU Forestry after I graduated in 2008, but I never really thought my connection would stay this strong. Living just 10 minutes away from campus, I've been able to attend many football and hockey games in 2022 and visited MSU Forestry classes more this year than I have since I was a student.

I'd say it hasn't always been easy for me to stay connected with the department. Work and family can easily consume my time and energy. But, at the end of the day, my family, location within the state, and job supports my commitments to MSU Forestry. I know it can definitely be challenging to carve out time in our busy lives to give anything our attention these days. Family, work, gardens, and other hobbies can pull us in many different directions all at once.

If you are feeling up to the challenge, I would encourage you to consider making MSU Forestry a new commitment in the years to come. We all have many gifts to offer, whether it be coming to campus to talk with the Forestry Club, mentoring a student over the phone or Zoom, volunteering to be on the Alumni Board, visiting campus once a year to hang out with students at Shindig, or cracking a drink with old friends at the tailgate. We all have room to grow and challenge ourselves to do a little more.

I completely understand how easy it is for our schedules to get overwhelmed and make excuses for not doing

something new. I will tell you from experience, over the last four years that I don't regret any minute of my time that I gave MSU Forestry. I met so many great students, reconnected with faculty, developed as a young professional, and hopefully helped build up some traditions within the Association that will last for years to come. I have grown in so many ways over the last four years.

Here are some of the activities that we focused on during my time with the Association; I hope you will continue to stay connected and consider giving some of your time and talents to this Association and the MSU Forestry Department.

- Alumni Football Tailgate
- Student Mentoring Program
- Supporting MSU Shindig
- Alumni Ambassador Program
- Spartans Serve Week

If you get a chance, please visit the MSU Forestry Alumni page, update your contact information, and check out other volunteer opportunities presented on the form. If you have any questions about becoming a mentor, becoming an alumni ambassador, hosting a student intern, participating in the MSU Serve Week, or how to get involved with the Alumni Association, please don't hesitate to reach out to us! I truly hope that you continue to find happiness and good health in 2023!

Your friend,

Jason Darling
BS 2008
President, MSU Forestry Alumni Association
Owner - Darling Forestry, LLC
Jason@DarlingForestry.com



EM ESCH is the Digital Media and Education Specialist for the Forest Carbon and Climate Program. She creates graphics, videos, and online courses to increase comprehension of forestry related topics and ideas.



DAPHNA GADOTH-GOODMAN is a Senior Research Assistant in the Forest Carbon & Climate Program. She specializes in forest ecology, carbon dynamics, adaptive management, and ecosystem response to climate change stressors.



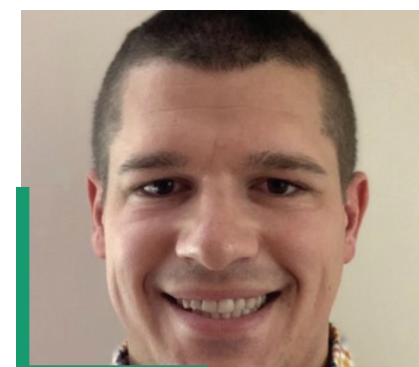
JEREMY JOHNSON is an Assistant Professor of Forest Genetics. He is interested in forest health and genetics, especially in the context of forest response to climate change and invasive pathogens.



KATHRYN MALONEY is an Academic Specialist for the Forest Carbon & Climate Program. Her research focuses on climate resilience, natural climate solutions, water policy, and collaborative governance.



KORY MCINTOSH is the Research Lab and Equipment Coordinator. Kory manages and maintains the analytical equipment for all labs in the department, along with the wood shop. She enjoys working with the students on a day-to-day basis and the creativity and problem solving she uses working in labs and the wood shop.



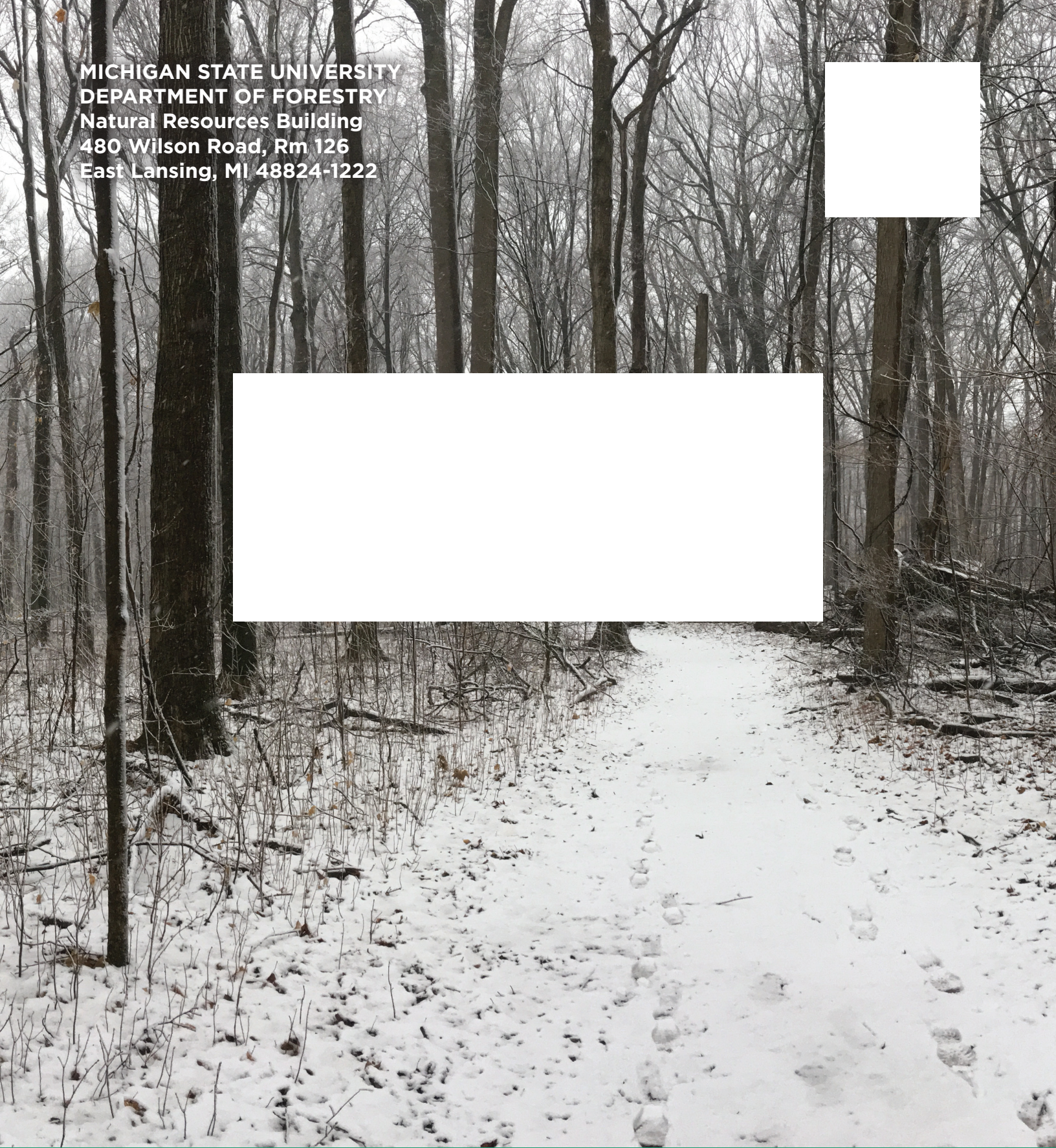
JARRED SARALECOS is an instructor of forest practice. His area of focus is forest outreach and education but has a special interest in connecting and engaging with communities and students to ensure a future forest products workforce.



ADRIANNA SUTTON is the Communications Manager in the Forest Carbon & Climate Program. She has worked in publishing for over 20 years with the last several years dedicated to books on science and nature.

New faces in 2022

**MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
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