

WINTER 2026

MSU FORESTER

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Department of Forestry
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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FROM THE department chair



Dear MSU Forestry Alumni and Friends,

We live in an uncertain world, which seems to be especially pertinent now. Regardless, MSU Forestry knows where we want to go and will figure out a way to navigate there. Here are our three current priorities.

First, we will further **enhance MSU Forestry's transformational education** and **equip our students to be leaders**. The Dr. Bob Marty Endowed Fund for Forestry Education, established through a gift from Dick Cooper (p. 8), supports this fundamental. At the core of our mission is a rigorous education that incorporates lots of hands-on, field-based learning. We will bring this vision to life by:

- Re-establishing a *permanent Forestry Education Field Camp* to host multiple courses.
- Supporting *out of classroom learning* – attendance at professional meetings, internships in DC, community engagement, and more opportunities to study internationally.
- *Connecting students with leaders* from industry and government, a key to educating future leaders.
- Providing *fellowships to train graduate students*, who will be future forestry researchers and a bridge to help ensure that teaching is informed by current research.

Second, we will **embrace advancing forestry knowledge** and **connecting it to other disciplines to address societal challenges**. For example, MSU Forestry can lead in advancing knowledge at the interface of:

- *Wood science and engineering* to develop sustainable bio-based products
- *Urban forestry, arboriculture, and human well-being* to promote vibrant communities
- *Forests with human and environmental health* to promote 'one health'
- *Integrated forest and agricultural land management* for climate adaptation and mitigation.

Third, we want to **heighten the impact of our education and research by supporting economic as well as social and environmental sustainability** in Michigan and beyond. We can achieve this by leveraging strong, existing connections and initiatives, such as:

- *MassTimber@MSU*, a program led by the Department of Forestry in collaboration with MSU's Construction Management Program and MSU Extension. This program is *leading mass timber research, education, and extension to advance mass timber* in Michigan and beyond.
- Our *great connections with the tree care industry* (see article on p. 5). We will aim to expand those collaborations, including faculty expertise in arboriculture.
- *Providing valuable talent to the forestry sector*, including students from our highly successful hybrid-online MS program (see student profiles on p. 6-7) – we aim to expand our capacity to graduate more forestry talent from this innovative program.

Alumni are an important part of the MSU Forestry Community, and we want our alumni to stay connected to each other and to MSU Forestry (see FAA President update on p. 10). If you are interested in leading a reunion of your graduating and adjacent classes, please let us know and we will help facilitate.

If you are interested in learning more about our priorities and how you can support them, please contact me.

The road ahead may be uncertain, but we know where we are going. Thanks for your support.

Go Green!

Rich



BILL SIEGEL | BS '54, MS '57

I've been fully retired for some time now after a career as a forest economist/attorney with the U.S. Forest Service in New Orleans and after that in a private law and consulting practice for many years. I still live in the New Orleans area and am active in church and charitable activities.

I still enjoy fishing, other outdoor activities, and traveling. I still serve on the Board of Directors of the Louisiana Forestry Association. Jim Granskog and Rod Busby, both of whom received PHDs in forest economics from MSU (much later than my time there) still live in the area after retiring from the Forest Service here.

DICK BARRY | BS '59

I graduated with a degree in Wood Processing and Technology under the mentoring of Dr. Aubrey E. Wiley. This degree leaned toward engineering in the field of wood products. My first job was assisting in building a sawmill in Golden, BC, Canada. After my four years as a navy officer, I worked for the United States Plywood Corp in their Shasta operations and later as a mill sales representative.

BOB WESTFALL | BS '67, PHD '72

My wife of 51 years, Sandy Fitzgerald Westfall, died of colon cancer in 2019. As I noted in my last report, I retired in 2020, along with my co-worker of 40 years, Connie Millar. We have emeritus appointments with the US Forest Service, so we continue to work. I had knee replacement surgery in 2019, but three years later we discovered that the implant had separated from the bone, so I had a total revision. Soon after that operation, I accidentally ruptured my patellar tendon. The surgeon attached an artificial tendon, but that failed, so he transplanted an autologous tendon. I have so much metal associated with the tendon that I have had Staph infections twice. I have also dislocated my implant three times (I'm pretty active). After the last surgery, a week ago, the surgeon inserted a hinged joint. No infection this time. In spite of all of this, I enjoy work, reading, music (alternative country and rock), and do a little gardening.

SALLEH MOHD. NOR | MS '74, PHD '77

I am retired and enjoying my daily walks and the family.

GEORGIA PETERSON | PHD '00

After working in Michigan State University Extension for the past 26 years, I am now officially retired. My time serving as a Natural Resources Specialist, as well as working with the MDNR Forest Resources Division in forestry outreach and education, has been full of wonderful experiences with a variety of dedicated professionals and audiences. I've had the joy of working with colleagues from Detroit to Ironwood and beyond. Now it's time to take my turn as a volunteer, showing up for the Michigan Forest Association and other natural resource-based organizations in my own local community.

WREN ROJAS | BS '25

I recently finished my season as an Advanced Trail Maintenance Corps Member at Vermont Youth Conservation Corps and am moving on to the Southeast Conservation Corps to work as a member of their Kentucky Fire & Recreation Crew at the Land Between the Lakes NRA for the spring. It's been amazing to have the opportunity to explore different parts of the country while doing work that I love with amazing and supportive crewmates. I hope to be continuing to do conservation corps work after I finish my season with SECC in May.

IN MEMORIAM

Leo Baumgartner (1929-2025)

Leo Francis Baumgartner passed away April 18, 2025, at his home in Sweet Home, Oregon surrounded by family.

Already an established arboriculturist and small business owner, three years ago Bryan Dobbs decided to take the next step in his career and become a Board Certified Master Arboriculturist (BCMA). This designation is held by fewer than 2% of professional arborists.



"I began looking over the study material to prepare for the BCMA exam and realized I was in over my head," said Dobbs. With this realization, Dobbs enrolled in the undergraduate forestry program at MSU. This was a particularly ambitious endeavor, given Dobbs owns and operates a tree service, has young children, a lengthy commute, and a wife with an established career.



After three years in the program, Dobbs decided he was ready for the exam. "I was feeling extremely confident in all of the study material for the BCMA because of my education at MSU, and I successfully passed the 160-question, four-hour exam. I feel really good about that accomplishment," said Dobbs.

Dobbs recalls several courses in particular that were particularly helpful in gaining the knowledge to pass the certification: Dendrology, Ecology, Entomology and Pathology, Soil Science, Plant Biology, and Silviculture and Urban Forestry.

"There is no way I would have successfully passed the exam without everything I learned over the last three years at MSU," said Dobbs.





Hybrid Online Masters Degree

LAUREN TAYLOR

What inspired your interest in pursuing a MS/PHD in forestry?

When I was looking to make a career change, I chose to pursue a MS in forestry because I wanted to spend more time working in the field and because I wanted to be able to directly manage large tracts of land with landowners that see the intrinsic value in doing so.

Why did you choose to study at MSU?

What appealed to me about Michigan State's hybrid online program was the curriculum and the opportunity to get hands-on experience. The program allows me to work full-time while completing the degree, but I still get to test my field skills with the two trips to Michigan, which I think is essential for a foundation in forestry.



What has been one of your best experiences within graduate school so far?

I've really enjoyed being able to apply what I'm learning in forests near me. Several courses have had me choosing a forest in my area to apply the skills I'm learning, and it's a great way for me to practice skills while also being able to work on my own time.

What do you want others to know about this program?

Even though the program is online, it can be rigorous, especially if you put in the time and effort. You get out of this program what you're willing to put into it.

What are some of the best things about being an MSU student?

I appreciate the resources that are afforded by such a large university. Having access to the technology/programs/online resources that I do is really important while completing an online program.

Any thoughts or advice for current students?

It's going to be a lot of work – remember why you were excited to take this step in your career and remind yourself that every ounce of effort you put in will pay off!

What are your future plans?

After graduation, I hope to find some type of position as a field technician to get some everyday hands-on experience. My long-term goal is to become a private consulting forester and my interest primarily lies in working with private landowners to manage their forests for overall ecosystem health, although I'd be happy to work in some sort of timber production capacity for a while.

Student Voices



JOHN LOOMIS

What inspired your interest in pursuing a MS/PHD in forestry?

I have worked in academia and research in Brazil now for 10 years in the sustainability field and wanted to develop technical skills in forestry, especially in the Amazon region where my work currently is centered.

Why did you choose to study at MSU?

I wanted to do a US master's that would allow me to continue living and working in Brazil, MSU's forestry program is established and the in person portions of the hybrid program was attractive to gain some in field experience and learning.

What has been one of your best experiences within graduate school so far?

The in person week long introduction into the course in August of 2024 was really great to jump into forestry and get to know my classmates. During the program, many of the courses have required going into the field conduct data collection and field techniques.

What do you want others to know about this program?

This program requires serious dedication and curiosity, but the professors and classmates bring a wealth of knowledge and experience that enrich students' experiences.

What are some of the best things about being an MSU student?

I think its making connections with many of these professors who are experts in their fields.

Any thoughts or advice for current students?

Don't hesitate to reach our to professors or classmates with any and all questions, I like to inquire about more practical aspects of forestry with my classmates and professors as I come from a research background.

What are your future plans?

Upon completing this course, I plan to integrate the skills and tools learned into my ongoing research on carbon credit projects in tropical forests and on sustainable cattle and agricultural systems in the Amazon. My goal is to apply these tools to strengthen the technical and financial rigor of forest conservation initiatives and traceability/monitoring systems in the beef supply chain. In parallel, I intend to start a small business in Brazil focused on supporting forest conservation projects and sustainable land-use solutions in the Amazon region. This would allow me to translate academic research into practical, high-impact applications that benefit local communities, producers, and ecosystems.



Dr. Bob Marty Endowed Fund for Forestry Education



Dick Cooper, ACF (Ret.) and his late wife Jan Tennant, Honor, MI.

MSU Forestry is pleased to announce the creation of a new endowment by generous donor and forestry alum Richard (Dick) Cooper (B.S., '68). The Dr. Bob Marty Endowed Fund for Forestry Education will provide educational opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students pursuing a degree offered in the Department of Forestry who have demonstrated financial need.

Dick was inspired by current undergraduate student Rachel Adams, featured in the summer 2025 edition of *The MSU Forester*.

"Rachel's story of how she 'discovered' forestry was almost the same as mine in the 1960s," said Dick. After graduating from the program with a degree in Forest Management, Dick worked for the State of Idaho Land Department for eight years before starting his own consulting business in northwest lower Michigan. "I've been very successful and lucky to have found my 'calling' and to have gotten the education at MSU that allowed me to be successful as a consulting forester," he said.

Dick attributes much of his professional success to the guidance and inspiration of his forest economics professor, Dr. Robert Marty. With a deep appreciation for the opportunities his education provided, Dick established this endowed scholarship to help future students pursue a degree in Forestry. His hope is that this award will increase accessibility and open doors for individuals who share a passion for sustainable forest management and stewardship.

Dick also established the CooperTen National Scholarship through the Practicing Foresters Institute (PFI), which was awarded most recently to Dustin Lambries, an undergraduate student in MSU Forestry. Through this scholarship, Dustin gained hands-on experience in forestry consulting, sustainable practices and resource management across various regions in the United States during summer of 2025.

We are grateful to Dick for his thoughtfulness and generosity. Please visit us online at for.msu.edu/marty if you would like to contribute to the Dr. Bob Marty Endowed Fund for Forestry Education.

2025 Year in Review

Thanks to 183 donations from 109 unique donors, we were able to accomplish amazing things.



Student enrollment is strong. With 90-100 students currently in the Forestry B.S., we are close to a 40+ year enrollment high.



Our research is vibrant, as indicated by 40 research-based graduate students (25 Ph.D. and 15 M.S.).



The Hybrid-Online M.S. in Forestry – the first program of its kind in the U.S. – is at capacity, with ~24 students enrolling annually.



Alumni support is expanding, with ~100 attending our annual tailgate and increasing numbers of alums donating and giving back, including the establishment of a new endowed scholarship fund.



The forestry faculty is growing, with six new hires since fall 2024, including silviculture, forest economics and policy, tribal natural resources management and fire ecology, nanocellulose production and applications, forest carbon and climate, forest pathology and undergraduate advising.

Update from FAA President

Welcome to 2026!

As 2025 came to a close, I was reminded of the value of belonging and relationships, reflecting on the holiday season and the connections made throughout the year. For many of us, 2025 was a time to recalibrate and adjust to new challenges – perhaps operational changes or responding to historic weather events like the Northern Michigan ice storm. Whether working on a fire crew, field crew or anywhere with uncertainty, one thing is certain: having a good crew makes a world of difference.

I was fortunate to present and participate in the Women in Forestry International (WoFo) conference this October held in Reykjavik, Iceland (yes, there are forests in Iceland!). It was remarkable to interact and connect with female foresters from 14 different countries while learning about new strategies for engagement to meet the challenges of managing forests for the future. While the landscapes were amazing, the best experience was that of belonging and finding 'my people'.

I shared this to emphasize the value of belonging and to add that we all belong to a pretty awesome group of people: MSU Foresters. Not just foresters, but Spartans. This year we connected during the football season at the annual tailgate in October. And although the outcome of

the game was not as hoped, the interactions were hopefully something to celebrate. More optimistically, MSU Forestry Alumni Association (FAA) efforts are working to continually engage with our current students through mentorship, including mentoring 15 students in 2025, and providing support for conference attendance.

This year we look forward to forming new connections and supporting MSU forestry students and invite you to join the FAA crew! Whether you are looking to serve as a board member, volunteer on a committee, participate in mentoring students, sponsor an event, make a donation, or simply hang out at SAF or the tailgate, you belong with MSU FAA! The invite is open to connect and learn more about open positions on the FAA board or activities to support. We continually seek donations to advance our mission and support the needs of forestry students. Wherever 2026 leads you, please consider supporting 'your people' – MSU Forestry – in some way!

Go green!

Heidi Frei
MSU FAA President
BS '02; MS '07
Michigan DNR, Parks and Recreation Division
State Park Forest Health Specialist

The mission of FAA is to strengthen and build relationships between alumni and our department, college, students, and friends of MSU that develop, encourage, and implement activities to promote philanthropy, service, and professional development.



Foresters at the 3rd annual WoFo conference tour forest recreation sites at Þingvellir National Park in Iceland. (MSU FAA president, front row, right. Photo credit: Women in Forestry International)

MSU FORESTRY apparel store



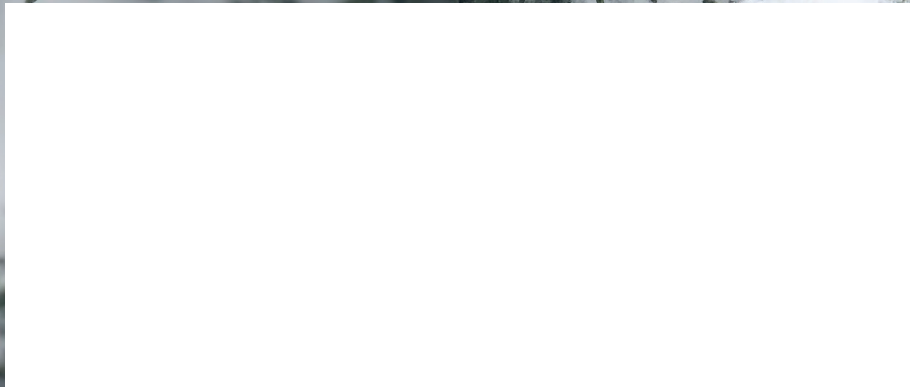
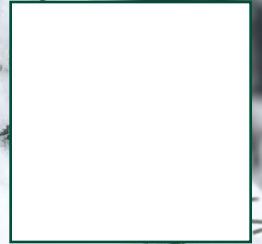
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