

WINTER 2024

# MSU FORESTER

year in review



Department of Forestry  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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## FROM THE department chair



Dear MSU Forestry Alumni and Friends,

Starting a new year provides an opportunity to reflect and look towards the future. While MSU had some challenges in 2023, support from all facets of our community – faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends – helped us come together to not only persevere but grow and accomplish great things. Based on a strong foundation of traditional forestry knowledge and skills, MSU Forestry has continued to innovate and lead in education, research, and outreach.

We are innovating in education and expanding the forestry workforce through our recently established hybrid online M.S. in Forestry, a professional degree tailored to students with a Bachelor's degree in a non-forestry field. Intensive in-person field sessions teach fundamental skills. Courses delivered online then guide additional field-based learning, regardless of where the student resides. This innovative degree program is the first of its kind in the U.S. and just cleared the first step (candidacy status) for accreditation by SAF. In the second year of the program, we are delighted to have 24 students enrolled, a substantial percentage of our student body (see page 10). Please help us recruit additional students to the Hybrid M.S., or visit [for.msu.edu/hybrid](http://for.msu.edu/hybrid) for more information.

We also are forging new connections between forestry and other disciplines, which elevates forestry as a discipline. Dr. Samantha Gailey, who is jointly appointed with MSU's Mott Department of Public Health, joined the Forestry faculty in August and is pursuing interdisciplinary research and teaching on the impacts of forests and trees (especially in urban areas) on human health outcomes (see page 9). To my knowledge, this is the first position of its kind in the U.S.

As highlighted on page 4, Baker Woodlot continues to be a foundational resource, especially for teaching and outreach. It was great to read alumni memories of Baker – a place of great learning. Under the leadership of Forestry alum Nick Sanchez (B.S. 2013) and Dr. Deb McCullough, Baker was inducted into the Old-Growth Forest Network. While Baker has a long history of management and may not fit a narrow old-growth definition as untouched by humans, Baker's careful and thoughtful management over the years has promoted the growth of large trees, a diverse size structure, and a diverse species composition.

Initiatives too numerous to include in this reflective letter (and covered in other communications) create a bright future for MSU Forestry. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you are interested in learning more about current initiatives and how your support can help create a brilliant future for our department and students.

Go Green!

Rich



# Baker Woodlot inducted into Old-Growth Forest Network

**B**aker Woodlot, usually a quiet refuge for joggers, birders, and students studying forestry or in need of a respite from the bustle of MSU's lively campus, welcomed over 75 guests on Oct. 7, 2023, to celebrate the Woodlot's induction into the Old Growth Forest Network.

The Old-Growth Forest Network is a national nonprofit organization that was founded in 2007 with the goal of protecting mature native woodlands.

Baker Woodlot joins 228 other Network forests in 35 states, including 11 others in Michigan. It is the first Network forest located on a university campus.

"Generations of students and faculty have interacted with trees in Baker," said Richard Kobe, professor and chair of the Department of Forestry. "In some ways, they feel like our familiar friends of different ages, species and sizes. It's an honor to work under this special canopy, and we're proud to join the Old-Growth Forest Network."

In addition to providing hands-on learning for forestry students and recreational space for the campus community, Baker also serves as a rich site for on-campus research. Reports, peer-reviewed articles and doctoral theses have explored all manner of Baker flora and fauna, from its

spider and fungi populations to recycling facility runoff, glacial sediments and the life-history of the tufted titmouse.

The induction celebration included remarks from Kobe, alumnus Nick Sanchez from the Old-Growth Forest Network, Professor Deb McCullough from the Departments of Entomology and Forestry and alumnus Jim Beach from the Biodiversity Institute and Natural History Museum at the University of Kansas.

Faculty led guided group tours through the woodlot, explaining the site's natural features and the evolution of the forest.



Forestry alum Ren McIntyre demonstrates how to measure the diameter of a tree



Professor Deb McCullough and Forestry alum Nick Sanchez with the new Old-Growth Forest Network sign at the entrance of Baker Woodlot



Professor David Rothstein guiding a walk



Professor Rich Kobe and Nexie guiding a walk



Over 75 guests were in attendance and made their way through Baker Woodlot



Professor Rich Kobe points out the intricacies of old-growth forest features in the woodlot



# Baker Woodlot memories

## CARL WORKING | BS '72

Baker Woodlot was very much a part of my MSU educational experience and I was able to introduce my now current wife to nature along with the Forestry canoe trip! We walked, talked and got to know each other before marriage! It was like a marriage prep program that the church held.

## WILLIAM RIVARD | BS '79

I remember Baker Woodlot most for the Forest Dendrology (Jonathan Wright) and Forest Ecology courses I took the first semester of my junior year. Stepping into the woodlot was always a respite from an otherwise essentially urban environment, even while concentrating on the lesson at hand.

## DON DEKKER | BS '81

My memories of Baker Woodlot stem from the late 70's, early 80's. I remember lab field studies with Dr. Wright, learning to ID trees in his Dendrology class. To this day I still remember some of his clues to ID a tree, "squashed rat pinecone!"

Every spring during maple syrup season, I recall the Forestry Club would go into the woodlot and tap the Maple trees to boil down into maple syrup. We'd finish it off on the stove in the kitchen off the student lounge by the "Polar Bear."

I remember the Forestry Club would go

out in the winter and cut deadwood for their firewood sales fundraisers. I recall this memory every time I'm out in my different forests cutting firewood for my personal use.

Good times for sure! Thanks for helping me recall my favorite Baker memories!

## JOHN CAST | BS '75

One Baker Woodlot memory in particular was a timber cruising class. A very interesting outdoor class as we were utilizing Biltmore sticks we built ourselves. The exciting part of this class was searching for a lost group; they were lost in a woodlot where one only had to walk 90 degrees in any direction to exit, and we all had compasses.

Then, there was that night I tried to ride my bicycle through Baker after dark. If I remember correctly, a fence around the woodlot prohibits a repeat adventure.

I spent many Saturdays in Baker, with MSU's Forestry Club cutting timber on cold winter days. I believe this is where I learned to drink peppermint schnapps.

After graduation, with a Forestry Degree, I spent the following 4 years with the United States Army, as a Combat Engineer, 24th Infantry Division, Fort Stewart Ga. I retired from General Motors in 2008 after 30 years.

I actually used my degree in 1981, while on reserve duty, cruising timber with Fort Benjamin Harrison's forester. I am currently employed by local high school to manage their swimming pool, and coach middle school swimming.

## KEN PEACOCK | BS '76

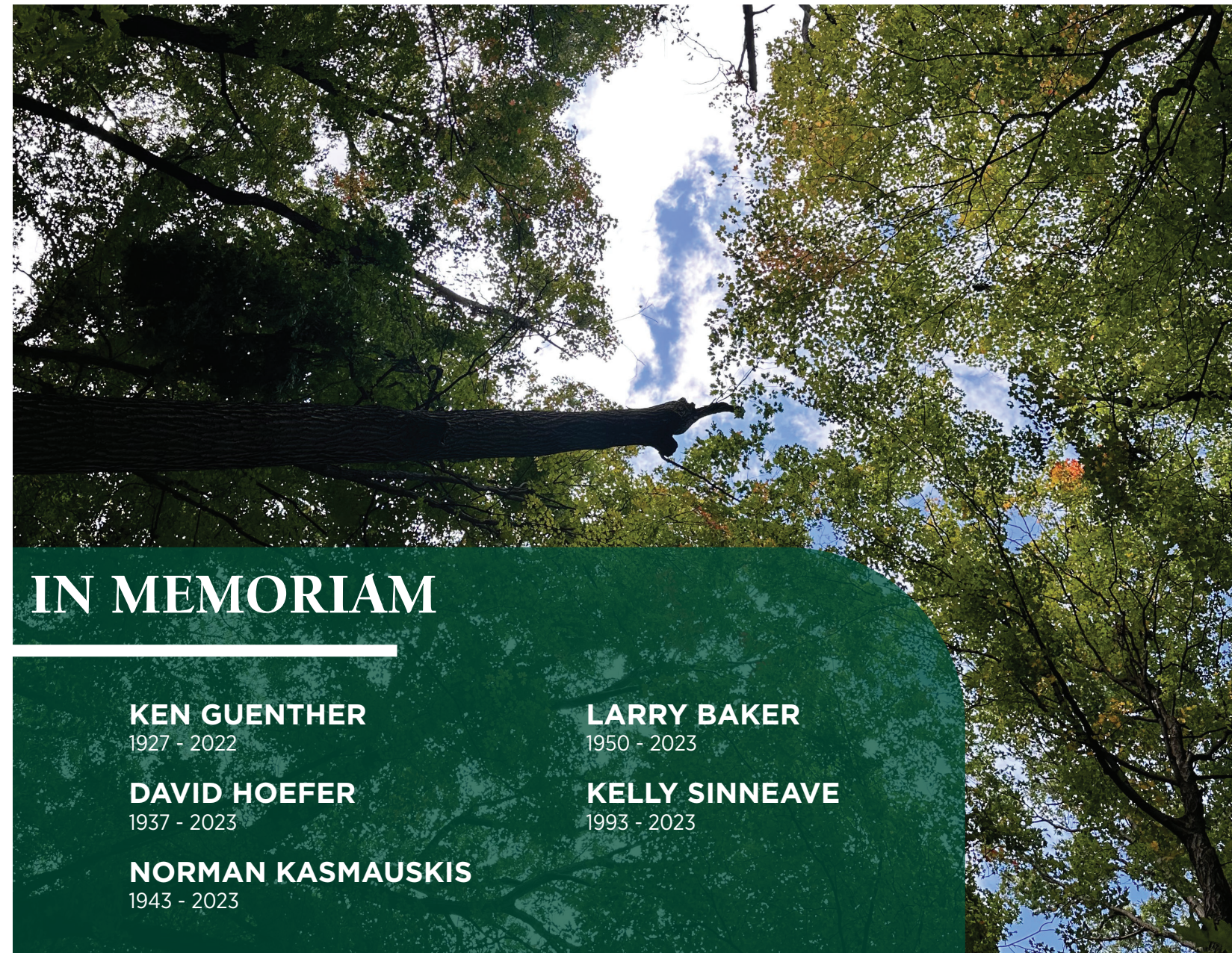
I recall Dr Wright seemingly walking us through every inch of Baker in Dendrology class, and not only did he know (and by inference, at the end of the class each student should know) the genus, species and common name of each tree, shrub and most forbs growing there.

It was the first natural outdoor lab in Higher Education that I recall at MSU, and on late

summer and spring days thereafter it was a quiet destination of reflection, a peaceful walk or bike ride.

I graduated from MSU in 1976, and had a long career in private industry with Kirby Forest Industries in southeast Texas, and later in the public sector with the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

I retired in 2013 from the BLM as the Wyoming State Planner, and still live in Cheyenne. I try to get back to MSU at least once per year for an event or just to walk the campus and reminisce. The memories flood back; I can't think of a better undergraduate experience!



## IN MEMORIAM

**KEN GUENTHER**  
1927 - 2022

**DAVID HOFER**  
1937 - 2023

**NORMAN KASMAUSKIS**  
1943 - 2023

**LARRY BAKER**  
1950 - 2023

**KELLY SINNEAVE**  
1993 - 2023



# FROM THE FAA president

As 2023 draws to a close, I'm probably one of a few people you'll meet that enjoy the snow and cold. Field work has always been more enjoyable to me on snowshoes, rather than swatting away blackflies or sweating in Michigan's lovely 95% humidity. A winter forest scene is just as beautiful in my mind as a flowering spring one. Make sure to take some time to get out and take in the cold. Follow a bobcat's pawprints through the snow or watch a large bevy of swans lounging together on an icy riverbank. It's easy to find beauty in the forest, no matter the season.

This past year our Spartan community came together as a family. We rebuilt from tragedy and found an endless fountain of support within one another. It's for this reason I know campus still feels like home to so many, no matter how long ago they may have graduated.

I had great conversations with both alumni and current students at our 2023 FAA Tailgate in September. Making new connections, and rekindling a few old ones, was a wonderful day to spend a beautiful fall afternoon. A big thank you to our sponsors and attendees. We hope it continues to grow year after year and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible.

Coming in 2024, our board has made the decision to start an "Honorary Alumni Award." These honorees will be those who have volunteered their time and efforts for the MSU Forestry department and community, but never actually graduated with a degree from the department. Our first recipient will be honored at the 2024 FAA Tailgate coming next fall. If any of you know of a person who exemplifies Spartan spirit and should be rewarded for it, please email me and they will be added to our list of prospects. It is important to take the time to celebrate the good in the world and we hope this award does just that!

On behalf of the FAA board, I would also like to send a HUGE thank you to Rich Kelly, our current Secretary/Treasurer, as his final term ends this December. I'll be honest that I may be a little lost without you, Rich. Thanks for all your wisdom.

Please enjoy a safe and healthy Holiday season, and as always, GO GREEN!

Hilary Wells

## Conclave 2023

On October 7, 2023, MSU Forestry Club students participated in the timber sports event Conclave for the first time in four years. Thanks to Michigan Technological University (Michigan Tech) for hosting and getting the program back off the ground, as well as guidance from forestry instructor Jarred Saralecos and Tree Research Farm manager Randy Klevickas, the students worked hard and were well-prepared to take on Michigan Tech in the UP. Scan the code to the right for the full story and feature video!

SCAN FOR  
ARTICLE AND  
VIDEO



### DR. SAMANTHA GAILEY ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH EQUITY

Introducing new faculty member Dr. Samantha Gailey, Assistant Professor, Environmental Health Equity in the Department of Forestry and the Department of Public Health.

Samantha Gailey is an interdisciplinary scientist dedicated to advancing environmental health equity. Her research draws on epidemiology, psychology, and geography to identify place-based causes of health disparities, particularly among mothers and children.

Much of Sam's work focuses on understanding and addressing inequities in access to greenspace – including parks, street trees, and urban forests – that affect public health. Her research uses innovative and diverse methodological approaches, from community engagement and dynamic ambulatory assessments to "big data" analysis.

## New faculty member in 2023

Sam holds joint appointments in Forestry and Public Health; she is among MSU's inaugural class of 1855 Professors, a collaborative and multidisciplinary group of faculty members chosen to promote social and environmental justice on and off campus.

In addition to understanding connections between greenspace and health, Sam's broader research program explores how structural racism, residential segregation, and neighborhood context perpetuate inequality.

The overarching goal of Sam's work is to inform policies and interventions to create more equitable, sustainable, and healthier communities in Michigan and beyond.

### GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN FOREST CARBON SCIENCE, POLICY, AND MANAGEMENT

The Certificate equips participants with the interdisciplinary tools and conceptual backgrounds to plan, implement, manage, and evaluate forestry-based climate change mitigation projects.

Check out other course offerings on our website!



**FOR 833**  
Human Dimensions  
of Forest Carbon  
Management



**FOR 835**  
Forest Carbon  
Policy, Economics,  
and Finance



**FOR 837**  
Measurement and  
Monitoring of Forest  
Carbon

Forest Carbon and Climate Program  
Department of Forestry  
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# Year in review

Thanks to generous donations from our alums and sponsors, forestry students experience a hands-on, fully immersive education in one of the best programs in the country, lead by world-class faculty.

## STUDENTS



OF B.S. STUDENTS SUPPORTED BY MERIT AND/OR NEED-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS



GRADUATE STUDENTS INTERVIEWED REPORTED FEELING WELCOMED



UNDERGRAD PARTICIPATION IN INTERNSHIPS, RESEARCH, OR EDUCATION ABROAD

## DONOR GIFTS HAVE STUDENT IMPACT



FIELD TRIPS



SUMMER CAMP



LEADERSHIP RETREATS



PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS



STUDY ABROAD

## RESEARCH

**\$5,623,008**  
2023 RESEARCHING FUNDING

**41%** OF TENURE-STREAM FACULTY IN TOP 2% OF SCHOLARS IN THEIR FIELD (PLOS BIOLOGY)

# New faces in 2023



**EVAN BERESFORD**  
Research Assistant



**SAM CLARK**  
Research Technologist



**SAMANTHA GAILEY**  
Assistant Professor,  
Environmental Health Equity



**DAVID HENDERSON**  
Research Assistant



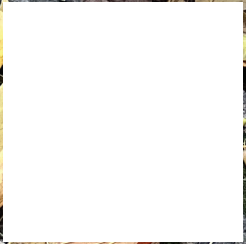
**SASHA LEPESCHKIN-NOEL**  
Research Assistant

NOT PICTURED: Sayon Ghosh, Research Assistant



David Henderson, part of Dr. Asia Dowtin's team, clearing a Greening of Detroit nursery site of grass and debris to prep it to plant a tree nursery in the spring as part of an ongoing partnership for research in storm water management.

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