



*Photo Courtesy of Grossman Forestry Tree Farm Group*

## Following the Plan

Make a plan to guide your long-term forest management

**“Careful husbanding of our woodland resources will benefit us today and our community and country in the foreseeable future.”**

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*Newberry, Michigan* - Ruth Dake owns a beautiful red pine forest. Large pine trees are widely spaced allowing the sun to stream to the forest floor. This group of pine trees has been cut five different times since first being planted in the 1950s. The forest now looks very natural with mature pine completely dominating the view across the forest. Back at her house, Ruth proudly shows off her large folder of forest management plans. She and her family are evidence that taking your forest management plan to heart, being patient, working with the site and getting professional advice from a forester can be very effective.

This success story begins in the early 1950s with a farm whose soils had grown potatoes and other crops. The family-run farm was located in Luce County between Newberry and Engadine. They raised beef cattle, potatoes and small grain. Unfortunately, the soils were eroding and lacking nutrients for growing agricultural crops. Ruth and her husband Paul began planting red pine seedlings on 90 acres of the farm around 1955. They placed hay in the gullies to slow the soil erosion and began to watch their pine trees grow.

As they raised their family of 10 children, Paul and Ruth realized that it would make sense to have a plan to guide their tree planting and forest management activities. Their first forest management plan was written by the Soil Conservation Service in 1962. Foresters at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources updated their plan in 1985. In 1994, consulting forester Jerry Grossman of Grossman Forestry Co. in Newberry developed a Forest Stewardship Plan for the Dakes and updated it again in 2000. Beginning in the 1980s, the family began to use government cost-share programs that help private forest owners manage, protect and enjoy their forests. The Dake family continued to improve their forest and plant more trees with help from foresters who knew how to navigate these state and federal forestry programs. Ruth says that, “Forest management is something you have to take a very long view of—much like a long term savings account in a bank.”

The Dake’s also joined the American Tree Farm System in 1985, which certifies thousands of other family forest landowners around the country who manage their forest for regeneration and conservation according to Tree Farm’s eight “Standards of Sustainability.” The American Tree Farm System started in 1941 when a very common forestry practice was planting trees to restore degraded soils, just like the Dake Tree Farm. The Dake’s purchased more land and planted more trees as the years went on. In addition to 167 acres of planted trees, there are 113 acres of managed northern hardwoods, 28 acres of regenerated aspen and 35 acres of protected and improved lowlands. Ruth Dake now has 274 acres of certified forest in the American Tree Farm System enrolled through the Grossman Forestry Tree Farm Group.

In 1990, when Paul Dake passed away Ruth made it clear to her children that she was going to continue to manage the family forest and make the decisions regarding its care. Ruth continues to work with Grossman Forestry Co. and the land continues to provide recreation, clean water, great wildlife habitat and steady, reliable income from the sale of timber products.

Ruth is an award winning landowner. Like many Tree Farmers, she loves planting trees, taking great care of her forest and working with professional foresters to get good advice. The Dake’s many awards include:

- Michigan Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year: 1985 & 1995
- Michigan Educational Tree Farmer of the Year: 1990
- Best Forest Stewardship Plan: 1994
- Luce-West Mackinac Soil and Water Conservation of the Year Award: 1995

**For More Information:**

American Tree Farm System - [www.TreeFarmSystem.org/Michigan](http://www.TreeFarmSystem.org/Michigan)  
Forest Stewardship Program - [www.Michigan.gov/ForestStewardship](http://www.Michigan.gov/ForestStewardship)



Ruth Dake displaying her Forest Stewardship Plan.  
*Photo Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy/Tina Hall*



Mature Red Pine on the Dake Tree Farm.  
*Photo Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy/Tina Hall*