

Hello!

Thanks for reaching out to the Conservation District. Kama and I really enjoyed meeting both of you and hiking your Solon Twp. property. Here is a recap of some of the ideas we discussed:

1 - Sugarbush or timber management on the south woodlot. This being your best quality northern hardwoods, we would love to see the school manage for high value timber species. The quality of the sugar maple is really good and aside from generating money, you could showcase how to manage to increase species and structural diversity, wildlife habitat and recreation - all compatible. The trees that you have already tapped are now not suitable for veneer or high quality sawlogs, but you could selectively harvest to open up the best sap producers. In sugarbushes we aim for low density in order to create the largest crowns on very few trees/acre. In the other areas, creating gaps in the canopy, mimicking a natural wind event, is a good way to encourage other more shade intolerant species to thrive. You could plant new, native species in those created gaps - trees and shrubs such as witch hazel, serviceberry, chokecherry etc. that would bring more diversity and horizontal structure to the woodlot. We would recommend having a forester out to give you their management thoughts and an idea of how light selective harvests done on a 12-15 year cycle could make sense in your overall property plan. I have attached our list of local foresters, and would recommend Lynn Bakker, Paul Gerhart or Bryan Watters as the three that might be the best fit for what you are trying to do out there.

2 - American Chestnuts - Dr. Dennis Fulbright is the retired MSU professor who spent a lot of his career on Chestnuts. He lives in Petoskey and has a company that specializes in helping new landowners successfully establish plantations and supports trees infected with the blight (with good success!) As Kama said, he is battling cancer but stays in communication with people via email and we hope he is soon out doing site visits and continuing the great work supporting this new local industry for our region. [fulbrig1@msu.edu](mailto:fulbrig1@msu.edu) I've attached a handout he prepared for a workshop in TC. <http://www.chestnuthelp.com/>

3 - We love the idea of pods or wildlife islands/travel corridors throughout your fallow fields. Patches of native conifer/hardwood/shrub plantings that fit the contour of the land would be perfect for that northwest area. Again, Conservation Districts sell bare root seedlings every spring and fall at the most affordable price. Keep an eye on our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#) for the exact dates as we approach them. Great project to have the students plant every season.

4 - Following through with Jason and Megan at NRCS after the farm designation and your overall plan is in place as to cost-share opportunities for the planting and other management practices. Your project would be a great use of federal funds as you involve youth and families in the community at large.

5- Climate-smart plantings – I have attached a table from a 2015 study that details the tree species that are expected to increase, decrease, or do well when introduced under Northern Michigan climate change predictions.

6- Coppice woodlot management – You mentioned wanting to keep your area of black locusts. Coppicing is a really cool and effective silviculture technique for them that produces many reasonably sized stems ideal for firewood/tool crafting/garden and farm structures. This practice is much more common in the UK, if you would like to do some further research. Some other species that coppice well are listed in this [article](#).

5 - Our CD has other staff that might have expertise in areas that would benefit your school and its future management - invasive species surveying/treatment options, soil/fruit farming projects, soil erosion issues, etc. As Kama mentioned, we want to be the organization that helps landowners with the natural resource topics they feel are important in our county, so bringing any areas of interest to our attention is very welcome.

Again, very nice to meet you and please let us know if we can provide any further technical assistance!

Best,  
Maddy  
Michigan Forestry Assistance Program