



VERSO PROJECT UNCOVERS VERNAL POOLS ON MICHIGAN STATE FOREST LANDS

MEMPHIS, Tenn., (March 3, 2015) – Verso Corporation (NYSE: VRS) today announced the release of a report titled *Identifying and Mapping Vernal Pools on State Forest Lands in Michigan's Upper Peninsula (UP)*. The report documents the results of a year-long collaboration between Verso, the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI, a program of Michigan State University Extension), the Michigan Forest Products Council (MFPC), and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), to identify and map vernal pools in the UP region, where Verso procures wood for its pulp and paper production. The goal of the project was to enhance the understanding of vernal pools' distribution and ecology in Michigan and how to effectively identify, manage and conserve them.

"The results of this project will greatly assist Verso, the MDNR, the MFPC and other partners with forest planning and harvesting efforts, and help facilitate sustainable forest management practices," said Jim Contino, Verso senior director, fiber supply.

Vernal pools are small, temporary bodies of water that form in shallow depressions primarily in forested areas throughout Michigan and many other states. Because vernal pools are small, isolated and dry for part of the year, they can be difficult to identify in the field, easily overlooked and unintentionally damaged or destroyed. Vernal pools are important because they provide food, water and habitat for a number of animal and plant species, including several endangered, threatened or rare species in Michigan.

"We feel the project was a success in that we were able to identify and map a significant number of potential and verified vernal pools on state forest lands that had not been documented, mapped or compiled into a single, statewide database prior to this project," said Yu Man Lee, conservation scientist/zoologist, MNFI.

Project accomplishments include:

- Reviewing aerial imagery and mapping a total of 1,332 potential vernal pools across approximately 120,000 acres of state forest lands within two study areas located in the Baraga and Crystal Falls State Forest Areas in Houghton, Iron and Dickinson counties.
- Surveying a total of 207 potential and new vernal pools in the field, of which 173 were potential vernal pools that had been mapped from air photos and 34 were new pools encountered in the field.
- Verifying and mapping a total of 112 active vernal pools in the field, and identifying 22 additional potential/likely vernal pools for which more information is required to confirm their status.

“This project was possible and a success because of the partnership and combined resources of those who participated,” said Debbie Begalle, assistant chief, Forest Resources Division, MDNR. “Michigan’s vast natural resources – from wildlife to plants – will benefit from the results of this collaborative effort.”

Information from this project will be provided to the MDNR to be incorporated into their forest planning and management efforts. This will help inform and facilitate vernal pool protection and management on state forest lands in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

For a copy of the report, *Identifying and Mapping Vernal Pools on State Forest Lands in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula*, please contact Yu Man Lee, MNFI, at leeyum@msu.edu.

About Verso

Verso Corporation is a leading North American producer of printing papers, specialty papers and pulp. Our printing papers are used primarily in commercial printing, media and marketing applications, including magazines, catalogs, books, direct mail, corporate collateral and retail inserts. Our specialty papers are used primarily in label and release liner, flexible packaging and technical paper applications. Headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee, with a business center in Miamisburg, Ohio, Verso operates eight mills strategically located in Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin with a total annual production capacity of approximately 3.6 million tons.

About MDNR

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. Michigan citizens own 4.6 million acres of state land that is managed by the MDNR. The land is managed to protect Michigan's natural and cultural resources, provide quality outdoor recreation opportunities, and foster regional economic prosperity.

About MFPC

The Michigan Forest Products Council (MFPC) is committed to protecting, promoting, and sustaining Michigan's forest products economy by representing and advocating for Michigan's entire forest product industry value chain. MFPC's advocacy activity focuses on three strategic areas: supporting Michigan's working forests, promoting business competitiveness, and ensuring sustainability. This includes working with municipal, state and federal leadership to shape science-based, economically sound policy; advocating for increased benefits to landowners; promoting family-sustaining employment and logger safety; and providing education on sustainable forest management practices. The Michigan Forest Products Council Foundation is a non-profit, 501c3 committed to the mission to educate and inform Michigianians about the benefits of sustainable management of Michigan's natural forest resources.

About MNFI

The Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) is a program of Michigan State University Extension. It maintains the most comprehensive database on the location and condition of threatened, endangered, and other rare species, and high-quality natural communities in the state of Michigan. MNFI also engages in applied research for the conservation of biodiversity and provides conservation planning information to decision makers.

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