The Michigan Wildlife Cooperatives program was created to assist in the creation and enhancement of wildlife cooperatives in Michigan. This program is available to provide support through networking individuals, providing resources, information, and assistance to fund habitat work within cooperative properties.

If you want to improve habitat, hunting, and neighbor relationships, you are a great candidate for starting up a wildlife cooperative in your area! This brochure provides some basic understanding of what a cooperative is and how you can become involved.
**BENEFITS OF WILDLIFE COOPERATIVES**

**Social engagement.**
Being able to share hunting stories and experiences is key to increasing satisfaction. Having an organized cooperative allows for these conversations to occur, and facilitates conversations oriented around how to improve hunting conditions in your area.

**Landscape level management.**
A single landowner has a pretty good idea what activity and habitat look like on their property. However, most wildlife has a range greater than the average parcel size. Having a wildlife cooperative will allow landowners to talk about their properties in the context of a greater whole, enabling the group to get a better feel for what is happening from a broad perspective and with combined data.

**Shared resources.**
Once some relationships have been established within a cooperative, neighbors may be more likely to share resources that they are in possession of. For example, if a farmer has a drill, they may be willing to let others in the cooperative use it. Another option would be to chip in with a couple neighbors and rent any needed equipment. Cooperative members can also work on each other’s habitat projects, increasing the enjoyment of work by sharing it with others.

**Greater access to support.**
There are many good speakers, experts, authors, etc. who are interested in sharing their knowledge with fellow hunters. Having a cooperative of active participants will provide some leverage and increased interest in these types of people coming out to cooperative meetings and presenting on their area of expertise. These resources are valuable in helping your cooperative grow in knowledge and skills.

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**STEPS ON HOW TO DEVELOP A COOPERATIVE**

1. Talk to a few neighbors, get a feel for interest
2. Connect with the Cooperative Coordinator
3. Create goals/guidelines for your cooperative with leadership group
   - Habitat and harvest management
   - Data collection
   - Membership goals
   - Acreage goals (define a boundary area)
   - Meeting objectives and frequency
4. Advertise for an initial meeting
5. Hold your initial meeting (goal of 20-75 people)
   - Talk about the goals and guidelines the leadership group put together
   - Ask for feedback on the goals and guidelines
   - Collect contact information
   - Have a large plat map that committed individuals can mark their properties on
6. Once confident on the goals and guidelines, plan out for the next year
   - Pre and post season meetings
   - Habitat day or educational workshop
   - Newsletters/email blats
   - Facebook (or other social medias)