

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funding

Chicagoland Communities Work to Combat the Emerald Ash Borer

The Challenge

Since 2006, Illinois has been battling the tree-killing invasive insect emerald ash borer (EAB) with a combination of management techniques individually adapted to its affected communities. As the ash borer spreads from one town to another, city managers and their staff are aggressively looking for ways to address this invasive species issue. Depending on the communities' ash populations, their economic situations, and their long-term goals, some municipalities are opting to chemically treat a limited number of their valued ash. Others are removing infected trees and creating a more diversified urban canopy. Adequate funding to accomplish these goals remains a concern, however.

The Solution

Many Illinois communities are making progress toward their goals with the help of funding provided by the Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and administered by the U.S. Forest Service. The GLRI program provides competitive funds that community-based programs and municipalities can use to address EAB impacts at the local level. The Chicago Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and The Morton Arboretum worked collaboratively to redistribute planting dollars to successful community applicants who used them to plant trees and conduct tree inventories. Successful applicants also had to have an EAB management plan in place. Several community grant workshops were held across the State detailing the grant guidelines and the types of assistance available to grant recipients.

A diverse group of 18 reviewers representing the Forest Service, city of Chicago, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Lake County Forest Preserve, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Openlands, The Morton Arboretum, Great Lakes and Saint Lawrence Cities Initiative, Commonwealth Edison, and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning evaluated the community proposals.

Resulting Benefits

The GLRI program's long-term objectives and outcomes were designed to improve a community's ability to manage and sustain its urban forests, thus benefiting the Great Lake basins. These goals were accomplished through a combination of technical assistance and funding to replant



People take part in an Evanston, IL, spring 2012 planting made possible with GLRI funds. Photo by Martha Logan, City of Evanston, IL.

trees to achieve a diversified urban forest. The subgrants helped revitalize municipal planting programs and address EAB management concerns.

A total of 26 municipalities, home to nearly 4 million diverse residents in the Great Lakes watershed counties, received \$500,000 in subgrants. This funding leveraged nearly \$1.5 million in matching funds. All recipients completed their reforestation projects on time as proposed, and 99 percent of subgrant funds were spent toward reforestation as budgeted. In all, 2,152 trees were planted, 74 more than proposed. Subgrant recipients planted no more than 25 percent of any one species, and most planting efforts yielded greater species diversity than originally planned.

Sharing Success

This EAB funding generated newspaper, radio, and TV media coverage throughout Illinois detailing the impact of EAB on the economy, the people, and the urban forest. The community benefits from these grant projects included EAB management plans, tree inventories, and increased tree planting and species diversity. These are important assets for communities addressing EAB as well as any new invasive threats that might emerge.



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