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Iowa's 2006 Accomplishment Report

Introduction

The Iowa Urban and Community Forestry (IUCF) program provides broad-based technical, educational, and financial assistance to communities, individuals and organizations. Residents value the program as a resource to protect and improve community trees and forests. Program activities result in improved awareness of urban forestry, its practices, and the benefits of managing a sustained and healthy natural resource.

IUCF combines federal, state and investor-owned utility funds to provide support and technical assistance to over 500 Iowa communities annually. Competitive matching grants are offered to communities throughout the state to increase tree canopy and enhance urban forest resources. Partnerships with cities, counties and non-profit organizations enhance and broaden the impact that the IUCF program has had throughout Iowa.

Trees For Kids

Trees For Kids is a tree planting and maintenance education program for elementary and secondary school teachers and students across the State of Iowa. Thanks to donations from MidAmerican Energy (\$30,000), Aquila (\$15,000), Alliant Energy (\$12,000), Modern Woodmen of America (\$2,750), Trees Forever (\$500), Iowa Woodland Owners Association (\$250) and Iowa Tree Farm Committee (\$250), the Iowa Department of Natural Resources – Forestry Bureau produced specially designed teacher tree education booklets, posters and materials to increase tree awareness in Iowa. Education materials focus on planting and care of native trees in Iowa. A new specially designed “Native Trees of Iowa” booklet was produced along with a 24” by 36” 4 color poster promoting native trees in Iowa. A total of 14,520 teachers received Trees For Kids materials. These teachers and their students in turn were given access to getting free or low cost trees through local Iowa Nursery and Landscape Association nurseries and garden centers and local Iowa Banker Association Banks. A total of 92,144 new trees were established (31,329 seedlings and 60,815 landscape trees) on school and public properties across the state worth an estimated \$6,097,168.

Demonstration Plantings

Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Foresters coordinated 71 tree school planting events across the state to celebrate Arbor Day by providing education presentations and helping 4,680 teachers and students establish a total of 963 new landscape trees. In addition, DNR Foresters assisted in the celebration of Governor Tom Vilsack’s annual walk across Iowa in August, by providing and coordinating the planting of 17 new swamp white oak trees, as well as 8 swamp white oak trees commemorating stops on the Des Moines Registers Great Bike Race Across Iowa (RAGBRI) that attracts over 14,000 bike riders from all 50 states and territories during the last week of July.

Reading Rangers

Not all schools in Iowa have room to plant trees nor can every school find time in their busy schedules to celebrate Arbor Day, so the Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau coordinates a reading and tree planting program called "Reading Rangers." For every 20 pages of a natural resources or environmental book or magazine read by a student during Earth Week (April 22-29, 2006) DNR Foresters will plant a new tree at Loess Hills State Forest in Western Iowa. During 2006, a total of 23 classrooms ranging from Kindergarten to 6th grade reported reading a total of 61,377 pages which allowed the planting of 3,069 new trees. Participating classrooms received signed certificates from the Iowa DNR Forestry Chief telling them how many trees were planted and where they were located.

Operation Releaf

Since the Fall of 2001, a partnership was formed with Alliant Energy and the Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau to promote energy efficiency, urban forestry tree diversity, and increased tree planting on private lands in Iowa. Operation Releaf is a residential tree distribution program with the support of Alliant Energy (\$225,000) that funds an Urban Forestry Specialist with the Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau and provides partial funding to buy and distribute locally purchased landscape trees and sell them at greatly reduced prices to Alliant Energy customers for planting in their yards. Iowa DNR Forestry buys landscape trees through a "Request For Proposal" basis, establishes local partnerships for distribution with local county and city organizations, and coordinates local tree distribution days with volunteers. During Fiscal Year 2006, a total of 18 tree distribution projects were organized on Saturday mornings during the Spring and Fall, and a total of 6,795 landscape trees were distributed to 3,398 Alliant Energy customers at a cost of \$25/tree. Customers also received planting and care advice and free wood chip mulch. The value of these trees is approximately \$679,500.



Volunteers are an integral part of Iowa's residential tree distribution program such as this project sponsored by Alliant Energy and hosted by Story County Conservation Board.

Plant Some Shade

Since the Spring of 2003, a partnership was formed with MidAmerican Energy and the Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau to promote energy efficiency, urban forestry tree diversity, and increased tree planting in private yards across Iowa. "Plant Some Shade" is a residential tree distribution program with the support of MidAmerican Energy (\$75,000) that partial funds a Urban Forestry Specialist with the Iowa DNR. During Fiscal Year 2006 a total of 8 tree distribution projects were held in cooperation with local, county, and city partners to distribute a total of 3,145 landscape trees to 1,586 MidAmerican Energy customers to plant in their yards. The value of these trees is approximately \$314,500.

Urban Forestry Challenge Grants

Thirty-one Iowa community organizations and governments were selected to receive *Community Improvement through Healthy Trees* grants from the Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau. The grants provided between \$500 and \$1,500 in matching funds for use in 1) purchasing and planting trees on publicly-owned property, and 2) conducting tree maintenance projects in Iowa communities.

Approximately \$39,000 of USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry Urban Forestry program funds were provided for the grants. Recipients were required to document project expenditures equal to or exceeding the amount of the grant. Many projects utilized volunteer involvement, and took place in parks, schools, and other high-use public areas. Tree planting projects were completed by June 30, 2006, and maintenance projects were completed by September 1, 2006.

From a competitive field of about 55 applicants, the following communities received grants: Allison, Atlantic, Clear Lake, Clinton, Creston, Davenport, Des Moines, Donnellson, Grinnell, Jesup, Keystone, Mapleton, Marion, Monroe, Mount Vernon, Merville, Muscatine, Nevada, Newton, Oskaloosa, Polk City, Red Oak, Shenandoah (City of Shenandoah), Shenandoah (Shenandoah Community Schools), Sioux City, Spencer, Story City, Van Horne, Waterloo, Waverly, and Woodward.