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Massachusetts's 2006 Accomplishment Report

Introduction:

With dense populations and vast town forests, along with a tremendous resource of town commons and conservation land, the people of Massachusetts have come to expect the steady comfort and beauty of trees in their neighborhoods. Through technical assistance, education, and grant funding, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) provides assistance to communities in their efforts to build support for community forest resources. Urban Forestry Challenge grants support local efforts to develop sustained urban and community forestry programs in Massachusetts towns and cities. The Challenge grants program is an amalgam of prior popular grant offerings such as Planning and Education grants, Heritage Tree Care grants which provide funds for professional care of large and historically significant trees in public landscapes and Mass ReLeaf grants that support tree planting projects throughout the Commonwealth.

In FY2002, DCR's Urban Forestry Program in partnership with the Massachusetts Community Forestry Council, completed a 5-Year strategic planning process. The plan identifies 5 broad categories of concerns and activities (stewardship, funding, awareness, tree canopy and management) that encompass a healthy urban and community forestry program. The plan then identifies strategies, actions and goals to reach the optimum conditions within each of these overarching categories. In FY2006, the DCR continued the process of basing its urban and community forestry activities on the recommendations and strategies contained within the plan. The urban forestry program also continued to implement its 5 year action plan as a sub-set of realistic goals. This document will function as our guidance document for annual work plan development.

Annual Tree City USA Forum - The City of Worcester hosted our annual Tree City USA forum and awards ceremony. The event was sponsored by the National Grid Corporation. The forum included a panel of leaders from five communities who talked about innovative efforts to build stewardship, increase funding, educate residents, grow canopy and improve urban forest management. The Commissioner of the DCR, Stephen Burrington, presided over the awarding of 80 Tree City USA awards, including 6 Growth Awards and 3 Tree Line USA awards.

Innovative Tree Inventory Program - In FY05, the DCR, working in partnership with the Cities of Worcester and Springfield, the Davey Resource Group and the USDA Forest Service Research Division, launched an innovative statewide inventory initiative. Through a planning and education grant DCR funded the development of an inventory and work order system for the two cities based upon Davey Tree Keeper software. As part of this grant effort, the cities and DCR secured from Davey a 3 year commitment to develop and offer a state wide on line free ware version of the system to 45 communities throughout the state. In FY06, this statewide inventory system was implemented with 18 communities

and agencies taking advantage of this unique offer. The DCR is committed to supporting the community inventory effort as a step towards the development of effective and useful management plans. Further, the compiled data from these 18 inventories provides an opportunity to analyze a broad sample of the urban forest in the state and provide those reports to the communities for advocacy purposes.

Public Awareness - In FY2006, the 351 Tree Wardens and more than 3,000 friends of Urban Forestry throughout the state were kept abreast of issues, new research, and events through our monthly Citizen Forester newsletter. This past year, the Citizen Forester highlighted topics such as the role of urban trees in combating air pollution, storm water management and urban tree cover, and emphasizing the importance of qualified personnel in municipal forestry departments.

Volunteer Program - DCR employs two community action Foresters who work to develop volunteer and partnership efforts. They work with the many communities which are initiating innovative approaches to urban and community forestry including comprehensive regional assessments, youth employment programs, citizen training programs and community planting programs to maximize local resources, harness volunteer energy and train future stewards.

Tree boards have assumed new prominence throughout the commonwealth. Many communities now have officially appointed tree boards, some growing from ad hoc committees created to address a specific tree-related issue. Currently there are over 115 citizen tree boards (or equivalent groups) in Massachusetts. Tree boards support the work of tree wardens, organize fund-raising and educational activities, and in some cases, provide leadership for a municipal tree program. We are continuing to encourage and facilitate the formation of additional groups. The DCR conducted its annual Tree Stewards Training Workshop at the Harvard Forest in Petersham.

Partnerships - Massachusetts enjoys a high degree of professionalism among several partner organizations operating at the municipal level as the hands-on caretakers of the urban forest. The Massachusetts Arborist Association in partnership with University of Massachusetts at Amherst, coordinates a training and certification program for arborists. Some 700 arborists hold the Massachusetts Certified Arborist credential. More are certified, additionally or exclusively, by the International Society of Arboriculture. The DCR continued its support of professional development for municipal arborists and tree wardens by awarding a grant to the Massachusetts Tree Wardens and Foresters Association (MTWFA). The association used the funds to defray some of the costs associated with a series of professional development classes and the Association's annual conference. The DCR and the MTWFA initiated the process of developing a long term vision for the MTWFA including specific steps to increase the level of expertise of members and Tree Wardens in general. The MTWFA and DCR also continued the process of revising Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87 which establishes the position and authorities of the Tree Warden in every community in the state.

The DCR worked closely with the Forest Service and other federal agencies on innovative forestry/urban forestry initiatives such as Urban Connections, the Urban Ecology Collaborative, the Northeast Urban Research Station NEURON event and the newly formed Boston's Urban Forest Coalition. In addition, the DCR continued to work closely with and support the Urban Natural Resources Institute of NE Research.

State Urban and Community Forestry Council - In FY03, in consultation with the President and Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Community Forestry Council (which had been acting as the state council for the U&CF Program), the DCR decided to withdraw annual grant funding from the Council. DCR began the process of reconstituting an advisory board with initial participation to be drawn from the active MCFC membership. In FY06, the Advisory Board supported the DCR program by participating in grant reviews. The Advisory Board also enjoyed the addition of several new members drawn from the

ranks of municipal arborists, consulting foresters, non-profit groups and the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Grants - In FY06, the DCR U&CF program decided to combine all of its grant programs (Mass ReLeaf, Heritage Tree, and Planning and Education grants) into one comprehensive grant called Urban Forestry Challenge Grants. Using federal funding, the DCR awarded 11 Planning and Education grants totaling \$128,022 to communities and non-profit entities throughout the state. These grants focused on topics of community awareness and public education, forest inventories and management plans, and innovative youth programs. In FY2006, the DCR awarded \$25,233 to 7 communities and groups for the professional arboricultural care of Heritage Trees. These grants highlight to the public and local decision makers the importance of mature trees and forests and proper techniques for their upkeep. The first ever round of Urban Forestry Challenge grants saw the awarding of 10 grants totaling \$111,660. These grants provided funding for a broad spectrum of projects including management plan development, inventory work, ordinance development, tree planting and public education/awareness. Exemplary FY2006 grant projects include:

Friends of WFCR (in Amherst) - \$5,000: A project to develop a 10 part radio series on urban and community forestry that would air on WFCR 88.5 FM as part of its weekly natural history radio program, *Field Notes*. The Field Notes program reaches approximately 100,000 listeners weekly in western Mass, southern Vermont, New Hampshire and Connecticut.

Town of Orleans - \$8,000: A project to complete an inventory of public shade trees in the community. This project will complement the town's participation in the Mass Tree Count state wide inventory system.

Southern Berkshire Regional School District (in Sheffield)- \$8,000: A project to establish a community tree arboretum and nursery to be managed by students of the regional high school. The project will also develop an inventory system for trees planted in local communities from the nursery. The Arboretum will be used for Arbor Day events and educational forums.

Urban Ecology Institute (UEI at Boston College) - \$30,000: A project to complete the city wide street tree inventory for the City of Boston. This project builds upon work begun in 2004 that was funded in part by DCR.

City of Chelsea - \$15,000: A project to develop and implement a community tree ordinance, develop a tree committee, develop an outreach and public education campaign for urban forestry, secure the services of professional consulting arborists to advise the committee, and plant 50 to 60 trees throughout the city.

Earthworks (of Boston) - \$17,500: A project to work with private landowners in Jamaica Plain to plant "Dooryard Trees" in front lawn spaces. The project will map, track and compile data on the trees and include the trees in the City of Boston inventory. The project would start with the planting of 250 trees.

Statistical Highlights

Number of Actively Developing Communities	144
Number of Actively Managing Communities	33
Number of Volunteer Hours	9094
Number of projects in Diverse Communities	15