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Maine's 2006 Accomplishment Report

Introduction

Project Canopy, Maine's Urban and Community forestry program, heightens public awareness of the community forest – what it is, and why it is important. The program promotes comprehensive community forest management and builds and supports sustainable local community forestry programs.

In the past year, Project Canopy has worked with the Project Canopy Leadership Team and field staff to identify communities with the greatest needs who are not currently participating in the program. Over the course of the upcoming year, program staff along with field staff will be working directly with those communities to further identify ways in which we can help them work towards developing sustainable community forestry programs. Though the Project Canopy Director position was vacant for the latter portion of the fiscal year, as well as one field staff in a heavily urbanized area of the state, program staff maintained assistance to participating communities and engaged additional non-participatory communities.

Funding - In 2005 and 2006, Maine's Project Canopy Assistance program funded 19 projects demonstrating sustainable urban and community forest management, 6 of which were awarded to communities that were previously non-participatory. Of the 19 projects, 7 used the funding to create sustainable urban forest management plans for town owned woodlands encompassing a total of 2,881 acres of municipally owned and operated forests. The remaining 12 cost-share grants were used to fund a variety of projects including street tree inventory and management plans, downtown district tree planting enhancements, vacant lot enhancement and installation of bicycle tree guards. The Project Canopy Assistance program continues to be one of the best tools to reach out to those communities not-participating in the program, as well as those that are participating, but not yet fully managing their community forest resources.

Training - Project Canopy continues to prioritize education and training for volunteers and city staff. An educated citizenry is the most effective tool in creating viable, sustainable local urban and community forestry programs.

In 2005 Project Canopy worked with state and regional partners to deliver training to 160 adult program participants. Educational and outreach programs reached an additional 1300 youth participants. The Maine Tree Steward program was held in the spring of 2006, training an additional 10 volunteers in community tree leadership. This is in addition to the 50 volunteers already trained through the program. Participants agree to contribute 20 hours annually volunteering in their local community tree program. Project Canopy not only provides educational opportunities for new volunteers, but for volunteers that have been active for years. Every year we host a Tree City USA Summit, in which representatives from

each of Maine's 14 Tree City USA's are encouraged to attend for a full day of training in program development. At the January 2006 summit, attendees benefited from an exercise in determining the factors that most limit program growth. The Natural Resources Institute also provided participants with training in Storm Damage Assessment.

Community Projects

Bath - The City of Bath is currently developing a management plan for two City-owned wooded areas, totaling 165 acres, integrating the principles of focus species forestry, utilizing additional funding support from the Maine Audubon Society. The goal is to have Bath's wooded areas provide material that can be utilized for local community projects and to replant harvest areas using local students. Materials harvested during the project will include white pine, which will in turn be used along with damaged granite curbing by a local artisan to create cost-effective, durable seating for the City's green spaces.

China - The primary and middle schools in the Town of China are located between three main village areas on a property of seventy acres, 50 of which make up the China School Demonstration Forest. The property has been sustainably managed for forest products since the early 1980's and has been recognized with numerous state and national awards including the Outstanding Tree Farm award in 1997 and the National Arbor Day Foundation award in 1998. The forest is noted nationally for its exemplary Project Learning Tree emphasis.. The Project Canopy Assistance program is supporting the community in the installation of professional signage throughout the forest to help the public understand goals and objectives of forestry activities when educators are not on-site. The town will inventory and develop a sustainable multiple use management plan for the China School Demonstration Forest, Thurston Park and Alder Park, and the plan will become part of the town's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Biddeford - When the City of Biddeford along with the local Canopy Committee, set out to convert a weed-choked vacant lot into a pocket park, they didn't realize just how big the project would be. The site was formerly a hard compacted gravel site that acted like pavement during rain events. The conversion of the site to 85% vegetation had the unintended consequence of reducing storm water runoff. The conversion of the lot also inspired local investment in the neighborhood. The park is located next door to the Stone Soup Food Pantry, whose took a leadership role and mobilized residents to take ownership of the park and the surrounding area. With her assistance, visioning sessions with local residents were held at the food pantry, and included residents, clients of the pantry and parishioners from St. Andre Church. Residents actively participated in the decision making process relating to all aspects of the park.

Ellsworth - The City of Ellsworth converted a lot once occupied by a Dunkin Donuts into an attractive gateway, called S.K. Whiting Park. The tenth acre parcel was planted with a mixture of shrubs, perennials and six 3-inch caliper red maples.

Statistical Highlights

Number of people living in communities that received educational, technical and/or financial assistance: 764,059

Volunteer assistance generated (hours): 6001

Tree City USA communities: 14

Tree City USA growth awards: 1