

Accomplishment Report 2007—Missouri

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Introduction

The mission of the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) community forestry program is to promote the development of sustainable community forests throughout Missouri. MDC assists communities through enabling grants, promotion and coordination of volunteer-driven community forestry programs, local coordination of the Tree City USA program, and numerous opportunities for training. A state coordinator leads the effort which includes seven urban foresters whose primary responsibility is the delivery of community forestry assistance. In addition, 58 field foresters also have some community forestry responsibilities. Statewide policy development and implementation is managed in partnership with the *Missouri Community Forestry Council* using a team approach.

The top emerging issues/opportunities include:

- Assisting communities that sustained major damage to their community forest in the past 12 months from ice and wind
- Preparing at the state and community level for emerald ash borer (EAB)
- Addressing urban sprawl and forest fragmentation along transportation corridors

Program Highlights

Action and Advocacy for a Healthy Community Forest

Missouri towns experienced devastating weather in the past fiscal year. Most notable were the straight line winds that hit the St. Louis metropolitan area late in the summer of 2006 and the massive ice storm in January 2007 which coated about 1/3 of the state with ice up to 2 inches thick in places. Both of these events caused massive power outages, some lasting 14-17 days. The Missouri State Emergency Management office reports that in a normal year Missouri averages one Federal Disaster Declaration. In the last fiscal year there were 17 such declarations.

While the community forest sustained massive injury, the silver lining is a renewed interest in trees and their values. Our foresters worked tirelessly in storm-damaged areas to provide assistance to municipalities, schools, counties, and homeowners. These contacts have resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of applications received in the Tree Resource Improvement and Maintenance cost-share program and in the number of request for on-site assistance. In addition, our Conservation Commission allocated an additional \$250,000 for this program to be spent in the counties which were part of the ice storm disaster declaration. Those funds will be spent in the next fiscal year.

Missouri Community Forestry Council

The Missouri Community Forestry Council (MCFC) continues to grow as an organization. In 2007 a fantastic conference was hosted despite a massive ice storm at the conference location. More than 100 people were in attendance with close to 150 registered. The Springfield Regional MCFC group worked hard to offer a broad palette of topics and engaging speakers. A one-day Tree Board Workshop premiered the day prior to the MCFC's annual conference. Lisa Burban of the U.S. Forest Service helped develop the agenda, identified many resources, and presented a good part of the materials. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, resulting in a second workshop which is planned for the next fiscal year.

Comprehensive Natural Resource Management

An astounding 12 community tree inventories were undertaken by Missouri municipalities through assistance from the Tree Resource Improvement & Maintenance (TRIM) cost-share program. These 12 projects were part of the 31 total projects that were funded through TRIM in 2007. The 31 projects used a total of \$246,071 in state funds and leveraged \$138,536 in local resources. A bonus cost-share percentage rate is available to any community certified by The National Arbor Day Foundation as a Tree City USA. This carrot has proven effective in promoting the Tree City USA program and comprehensive natural resource management. Two new communities joined the Tree City USA program in 2006 and an impressive 17 communities earned Growth Awards. Many of the activities undertaken to earn the Growth Award were enabled by funding through the TRIM program.

EAB Planning

Missouri's Gypsy Moth Steering Committee was approached by the community forestry coordinator with the request to broaden its focus to include all invasive tree pests. This request grew into multiple meetings of key stakeholders and a draft EAB preparedness plan for the state. In addition EAB preparedness planning programs targeted at communities were hosted in the two largest metropolitan areas in the state.

Statistics

Managing and Developing Communities:	178
Population of Participating Communities:	2,861,273
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	33,704