

Accomplishment Report 2007 – Connecticut

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State Contact

Chris Donnelly
Urban Forestry Coordinator
Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Forestry
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: (860) 424-3178
Fax: (860) 424-4070
E-mail: chris.donnelly@po.state.ct.us
Web site: www.dep.state.ct.us/burnatr/forestry/urbanforest/urbanfor.htm

Introduction

Connecticut is a highly urbanized, heavily forested state. According to U.S. Forest Service figures, nearly 60% of the state is forested. At the same time, the population density of the state averages better than a person per acre, with approximately 80% of Connecticut's citizens living in urban or suburban environments. Thus, virtually all citizens of Connecticut live in close proximity to trees. The health and well being of the urban forest is of concern to everyone in the State.

Critical Issues

This close connection between people and trees in Connecticut provides a great number of opportunities and challenges. The state's older, industrial cities are densely populated and limited in financial resources. They also carry the legacy of an urban forestry infrastructure that is old, heavily used and suffering from a history of deferred maintenance. The older suburban areas face the consequences of decades of growth, much of it car-centric and inconsistently planned. Home rule, with its strong emphasis on problem-solving with a narrow, local focus, also leaves its impact. The newer suburbs and rural areas face the pressures of rising land values, sprawl and uncertainty about the best ways to deal with what seems to be a constantly accelerating problem.

Fortunately, good people and good programs are arising to face these challenges. The interest in urban forestry continues to grow, along with the expectations as to what this profession can apply to solving these difficult problems.

Program Highlights

Hartford Urban Forest Effects (UFORE) Analysis: During the past year, the Knox Parks Foundation, a non-profit organization in the City of Hartford, completed the collection of data for a UFORE analysis within the city. Knox Parks hired four interns – current college students in the Hartford area – to visit 200 1/10-acre plots, record tree and ground cover data and input these data into an electronic format. These data will be the basis of an analysis of the function and value of the urban forest in Hartford by the U.S. Forest Service.

This Hartford UFORE project is the outcome of a joint effort on the part of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the City of Hartford and Knox Parks Foundation. These partners began meeting as a group in the early part of 2007 to plan this project. Once the analysis is completed, they will meet to disseminate the lessons learned and to make this scientific understanding of the Hartford urban forest the basis of policy and practical decisions within the city.

Connecticut Construction Career Day: A second noteworthy activity in the State is the tree care profession's participation in Connecticut Construction Career Day (CCD). CCD is an annual event established to allow various trades the opportunity to reach out to senior high school students, and demonstrate to these students the work involved in various professions and the opportunities for them within these possible careers. Tree care proved itself a natural fit within this event. As the construction professions increasingly recognize the importance of a "green" perspective, the role of trees in construction projects has also become more intuitive and obvious. Also, the sort of work that tree care involves, including climbing and planting trees, has a natural appeal to many within this audience. The fact that there is real career potential in this field just rounds out the picture.

The Connecticut Urban Forest Council, the Connecticut Tree Protective Association and the New England Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture joined together to design and staff a booth on careers in arboriculture. Additionally, the Tree Division within the Connecticut Department of Transportation kept themselves busy much of the two days, helping youngsters into a tree climbing saddle and then up into a tree so that they could see for themselves what this experience is like. Over the course of 2 days, some 1,200 students from 60 high schools from around the state participated in this career day.

Management Plans: Meanwhile, other communities in the state have also been active. The Town of Sprague, a small, eastern Connecticut community, participated with the larger urban forestry community in establishing management plans for several open space parcels in the community. The Town of Orange undertook a tree-planting project at its community center. A high school student in the Town of Woodbury, as part of a class project, filmed a documentary on the town's Tree Warden. Students at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies worked with the City and citizens of New Haven to produce a management plan for an "urban wild" area in the city. The Towns of Hamden and of West Haven each worked to develop post-storm tree management response kits that would be available should a major natural disaster hit those communities and cause extensive tree damage.

These are but a few highlights from around the State of Connecticut. Urban forestry continues to be an important contributor to the environmental and social quality of life in the State, and continues to remain on a solid foundation State wide.

Statistics

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| Number of Communities | 169 |
| Communities Participating | 147 (233 Developing, 14 Managing) |
| Population of Participating Communities | 3,211,491 |
| Volunteer Assistance Generated | 11,200 |
| Tree City USA or Equivalent | 13 |
| Tree City USA Growth Awards | 2 |