

2008 Accomplishment Report – Connecticut

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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.

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 locally focused problem-solving, also has an 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 of what this profession can apply to solving these difficult problems.

Key Accomplishments

Continuing an effort begun last year, the city of Hartford, Knox Parks Foundation, U.S. Forest Service, and Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection published a summary of the results of the 2007 Urban Forest Effects (UFORE) analysis done within the city. New Haven continues to make use of the i-TREE STRATUM analysis that it completed, primarily through the efforts of the Urban Resources Initiative of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Two communities (West Haven and Hamden) also continued the work begun on storm damage management planning by assembling storm preparedness kits. The recommendation as to what to include in these kits came about through a series of meetings, in which several communities in the New Haven area participated. Fortunately, there has not yet been a need to test out the usefulness of these kits.

For the second year, the tree care profession and volunteers have participated in the 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. Through CCD, these trades can demonstrate the kind of work involved in various professions and the career opportunities that exist.

Similar to last year, the Connecticut Urban Forest Council, Connecticut Tree Protective Association, and Milford Trees, Inc., 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 2 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, approximately 1,200 students from 60 high schools from around the State participated in this career day.



The State has been very active in its grants to communities. One project to highlight is the recently completed Geographic Information System (GIS) Boot Camp held at Seaside Park in Bridgeport. Designed by the city's parks staff, the camp was part of the city's annual summer camp for younger teenagers. During the course of the summer, these campers used hand-held GIS devices to map and record data on the trees within this park. Besides learning valuable computer skills and a lot about trees, the young participants got to work directly with the arborist hired to oversee this project, with many of these youngsters now considering a future in tree care.



Youth participate in the Connecticut Construction Career Day (above) and GIS Boot Camp (below).

Other projects from the past year include tree planting projects in Watertown, Bridgeport, East Haddam, Clinton, Sprague, Monroe, Norwalk, and New Milford. Educational projects occurred in Ridgefield and Fairfield. In Cheshire, fourth graders advised the town on proper species selection and proper planting depth on a tree planting project the students designed and participated in implementing. In Coventry, an urban forestry grant was used to help the community design a trail. The city of Bristol hired an intern to initiate a street tree inventory, and Glastonbury received a grant to supplement their tree maintenance activities through the purchase of new equipment. In Ansonia, a local nature center worked to restore the natural vegetative structure around a pond, and in Middletown, the city worked to establish a tree nursery.

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 on a statewide basis.

Statistical Highlights

Number of Communities	169
Communities Participating	154 (126 Developing, 27 Managing)
Population of Participating Communities	3,305,812
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours)	12,500
Tree City USA or Equivalent	13
Tree City USA Growth Awards	4