

2008 Accomplishment Report – Massachusetts

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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 2008, the DCR began offering Urban Forestry Environmental Justice Challenge Grants as a special category of the larger grant program to focus resources on those communities and populations in the State that are most in need.

Key Accomplishments

In 2002, DCR's Urban Forestry Program, in partnership with the Massachusetts Community Forestry Council, completed a 5-year strategic planning process. The plan identifies five 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 2008, 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 subset of realistic goals. This document will function as our guidance document for annual work plan development.

The Town of Wellesley, the first community in the State to reach the 25th year of Tree City status, hosted the State's annual Tree City USA forum and awards ceremony. The event was sponsored by the Wellesley Natural Resources Commission and the Roche Brothers Grocery Market Company. The forum included a presentation by Matt Arnn of the U.S. Forest Service, who discussed his research and implementation strategies for using urban forestry to address watershed health issues. The Commissioner of the DCR, Rick Sullivan, presided over the awarding of 89 Tree City USA awards, including 8 Growth Awards and 3 Tree Line USA awards.

In 2008, the 18 communities that took advantage of the statewide inventory system offered by the DCR and Davey Resource Group continued to complete their inventory data and work with the system. 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.

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 the program's monthly *Citizen Forester* newsletter. This past year, the *Citizen Forester* highlighted topics such as urban soil science and management, the role of urban trees in combating air pollution, stormwater management and urban tree cover, and emphasizing the importance of qualified personnel in municipal forestry departments.

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

Grants

In 2008, the DCR awarded \$240,000 to 29 communities and groups through the Urban Forestry Challenge Grant Program. These grants provided funding for a broad spectrum of projects including management plan development, inventory work, ordinance development, tree planting, and public education/awareness. For the first time, the DCR offered a special category of grant funding as Urban Forestry Environmental Justice Grants. The program, in collaboration with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, offers competitive **75-25 matching grants** to municipalities and nonprofit organizations working in environmental justice communities in Massachusetts. The purpose of these grants is to advance environmental equity, improve environmental quality, and build local capacity for urban and community forestry in environmental justice communities.

The DCR funded these Urban Forestry Environmental Justice Grants:

Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) – \$10,000 grant/\$18,600 local match: A grant to develop a Green Streets demonstration project along a section of Everett Street in Allston and Brighton. The project aims to design and implement a system of green infrastructure that will maximize the use of street tree cover for stormwater interception as well as temperature mitigation and air quality improvement. This project illustrates the connection between green infrastructure, stormwater management, and ultimately water quality. The three partners in this effort—CRWA, Alston Brighton Community Development Corporation, and the city of Boston—each bring their own interests to the project, reflecting the nexus of the many and varied benefits of urban forestry, including community building, water quality improvement, and urban canopy enhancement. Further, by redeveloping an area that is currently 100% paved surfaces with innovative tree planters, the project offers exemplary options for bringing trees and vegetation into similar highly-degraded urban areas.

Lynn Investing in Neighborhood Corp. (LINC) – \$3,000 grant/\$47,462 local match: A grant to develop a publicly accessible community garden at the Ford Elementary School in the Highlands section of Lynn. This is a low-income neighborhood with a high immigrant population and low access to public green spaces. This project will significantly reduce the impermeable surface area around a



Vocational school students Jeremy, Johnathan, and Langston used their carpentry and plumbing skills to build raised beds and install a sprinkler and irrigation system for the Ford Elementary School project in Lynn, MA.

public school and will provide hands-on natural resource-based educational opportunities to elementary students. The project will be conducted in partnership with the city of Lynn and neighborhood resident volunteers.

Groundwork Lawrence, Inc. – \$12,000 grant/\$18,495 local match: A grant to develop and implement a “Green Streets” tree planting program in the city by planting trees within the set-back zone of private properties along public roads. The project will coordinate with several low-cost housing development agencies and organizations to introduce trees onto their properties. Nonprofit housing partners include Habitat for Humanity; Bread & Roses Housing, Inc.; and Lawrence Community Works.

Worcester Housing Authority (WHA) - \$10,000 grant/\$25,597 local match: A grant to plant trees in seven federally funded, low-cost, public housing developments managed by WHA. This project will be a partnership between WHA and the city of Worcester, and will employ the services of the WHA youth crew to plant and maintain the trees.

EarthWorks Projects, Inc. - \$15,000 grant/\$33,883 local match: A grant to train disadvantaged residents of the city of Boston to provide volunteer arboricultural care for local wild fruit orchards growing within the city. Produce from the orchards will be harvested by trained youth stewards and neighborhood volunteer groups and will be provided to local low-cost food distributors. The produce distribution will be targeted to food pantries and shelters for homeless citizens and other agencies and organizations that serve disadvantaged populations. The project proponents will develop a marketing campaign for the produce to educate the public about the many environmental and social benefits of buying locally produced foods and foods that are grown in urban centers.

Lynn Investing in Neighborhood Corp. (LINC) - \$12,600 grant/\$16,220 local match: A grant to plant 44 trees in the Highlands section of Lynn, a low-income neighborhood with a high immigrant population. The project will be conducted in partnership with the city of Lynn Department of Public Works and neighborhood resident volunteers.

Volunteer Program

The DCR employs a community action forester who works to develop volunteer and partnership efforts, primarily in western Massachusetts. The program coordinator and the community action forester work with many communities that 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 116 citizen tree boards (or equivalent groups) in Massachusetts. Tree boards support the work of tree wardens, organize fundraising 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. The training targeted tree committee members, municipal natural resource decisionmakers and staff, municipal department of public works employees, tree wardens, and citizen activists. The training was conducted largely under the leadership of the community action forester.

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 the 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 continued 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.

Statistical Highlights

Managing and Developing Communities	154
Population of Participating Communities	4,507,504
Number of Volunteer Hours	9,500