

2008 Accomplishment Report – Minnesota

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Introduction

Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) in Minnesota is a statewide collaboration that unites many agencies, organizations, communities, decisionmakers, and citizens throughout the State. The challenges that we have identified are:

- Minnesota communities need quicker and more access to expertise, training and current technology, research, information, and technical assistance;
- Heightened political awareness and support for State funding initiatives;
- Increased partnerships among communities in Minnesota;
- Loss of forest land to urbanization, disease, and insects; and
- Lack of vision for sustainable community design, ecosystem approaches.

Key Accomplishments

The **City of Red Wing's Urban Forest Asset Management Program** project was the culmination of two previous ReLeaf Grant projects, all cost-shared with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Forestry, using Minnesota Natural Resources Trust Fund dollars through the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). The project included inventory, planting, production of a public education video, department head and employee training, and development of an asset management plan. The previous inventory was imported into a geographic information system (GIS) and updated by adding a geospatial positioning system (GPS) component.

The 30-minute video produced as part of the project is being used for staff and volunteer training and for public education. The city planted more than 220 trees on public rights-of-way from the fall of 2005 to fall 2006. Certified arborist Katie Himanga conducted training sessions for public works staff on tree health monitoring, risk assessment, proper pruning and pruning tools, proper planting, and general tree maintenance. She also did a presentation on tree benefits to all city department heads and elected officials, and worked with Public Works staff to fully integrate Red Wing's green and gray infrastructure, resulting in a comprehensive asset management plan and annual work plans. For example, in 2008 city crews plan to correct all branch attachments with included bark on street trees, greatly improving their storm resistance and overall structural integrity.

Red Wing, St. Cloud, Rochester, Minneapolis, and other communities continue to use the results of *i-Tree software analysis* of the ecological and monetary value of their urban forests to justify increased investments in management. The Forest Service and its cooperators tested *i-Tree software applications*

and field methods for data collection in Minneapolis, where the legacy of tree planting, management, and desire for improved stewardship make it an ideal community to showcase the results.

The *i*-Tree initiative continues to provide benefits to participating communities in a variety of ways, including increased information resources related to ecological and monetary value of the urban forest. An ecological analysis (UFORE) and benefit analysis (STRATUM) were completed and used to produce the *Midwest Community Tree Guide – Benefits, Costs and Strategic Planting*. The guide is available online and copies are being distributed to many communities across the State.

The **Minnesota ReLeaf Grant Program** received a \$500,000 allocation of State bonding funds for the first time, demonstrating that legislators and agency leaders recognize managed urban forests as functioning green infrastructure, providing environmental services with measurable economic value. Guidelines were developed for forest health and replanting.

The **CITY TREES Sustainability Guidelines and Best Practices** document was developed by Tree Trust and Bonestroo and Associates. The focus of these guidelines is to develop the best ways to mitigate global warming by planting trees to sequester and store carbon, and integrate trees for stormwater management and water quality. The guidelines were developed to support projects in Minneapolis, but are increasingly being used by a wide-ranging audience, including local and State governments, consultants, developers, homeowner associations, neighborhood groups, and environmentalists. See details at <http://www.bonestroo.com/Documents/CityTreesGuidelines/tabid/222/Default.aspx>.

Liaison and Networking

DNR UCF staff developed new and expanded working relationships with:

- **League of Minnesota Cities** (LMC) with a “Trees Pay Us Back” presentation at their annual convention and by arranging to link the MNtrees.org Web portal to LMC member cities.
- **Minnesota Pollution Control Agency** with review of guidelines for the State of Minnesota Stormwater Manual: <http://proteus.pca.state.mn.us/water/stormwater/stormwater-manual.html>, and providing the new Urban Forest Project Reporting Protocol from the U.S. Forest Service Southwestern Research Station: <http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/programs/cufr/UrbanForestProtocol0812081ForBoardApproval.pdf>.