

2008 Accomplishment Report – Vermont

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Introduction

The Vermont Urban and Community Forestry (VTUCF) Program's mission is to promote the stewardship of urban and rural forest landscapes to enhance the quality of life in Vermont communities. This mission recognizes the need to address environmental, economic, and social values of forests from the urban core, to suburban developments, to rural forest land. The program assists in developing sustainable local programs by providing technical and financial assistance, information, and education. The program team consists of the State coordinator, a community involvement coordinator, and five district urban and community foresters. The Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Council, which is composed of 20 members representing professional associations, educational institutions, nonprofit groups, regional officials, tree boards, and State agencies, works in partnership with the VTUCF Program to identify the State's urban and community forestry needs and to determine program direction.

Key Accomplishments

A Local Tree Advocate's Voice is Heard

The Town of Charlotte is a picturesque agricultural community overlooking Lake Champlain and home to tree advocate Larry Hamilton. As the town's tree warden, Larry is the local voice for tree preservation and care in the community. Not afraid to express his opinions, he used local media to share his passion about trees and his observations that the town's roadside trees were being lost with greater frequency due to senescence and injury. His voice was heard and the town began receiving private donations for tree replacement and care, including a donation for \$25,000. With the money, the town started a Tree Fund, which is administered by a new tree advisory group. Members of the advisory group include Larry and Annemarie Curlin, a 2007 graduate of the State's Stewards of the Urban Landscape (SOUL) Tree Steward program.

The funds will be used to institute a 5-year roadside tree restoration program that focuses on assisting landowners with planting trees on private property where growing conditions are more suitable. The advisory group, who determined they could save money and plant more trees by growing their own trees, started a tree nursery in 2007. It was also determined that



Members of the Charlotte Beautification Committee take a picture break from tending their community tree nursery.

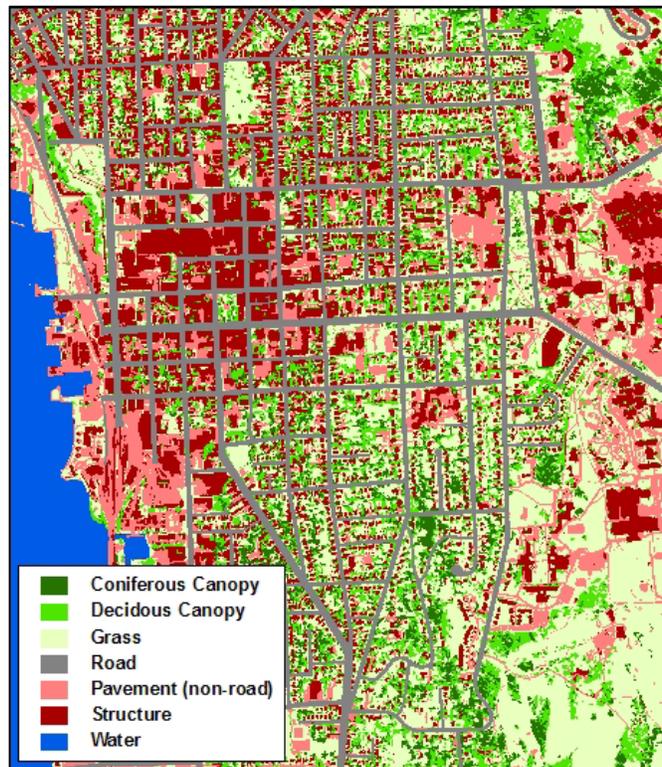
they needed a cadre of residents who could care for the new trees. With a grant from the State's Trees for Local Communities program in 2008, 20 residents of Charlotte are currently going through a six-session course designed by the advisory group to become Tree Keepers. Larry, with help from the tree advisory group, the Tree Keepers, and financial donors, is restoring the canopy that once graced Charlotte's streets. Larry continues to use the media, but now he reports on the many successes of the roadside tree restoration program.

Storm Damage Assessments

July 18 and 19 brought a series of damaging storms that left several Vermont communities crippled with downed trees and debris. Once first responders cleared the way, the VTUCF Program was called in for the first time to report estimates of tree debris cleanup costs to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Armed with the U.S. Forest Service's Storm Damage Assessment Protocol, program staff members spent several days working one-on-one with four communities and the State agencies of Transportation and Emergency Management to supply the necessary estimates and develop a recovery plan. Today, those communities are well on their way to recovery and working to reduce their risk in future weather events. The expertise of the VTUCF Program has since been written into our State's response plan as a resource for local communities. In addition, our State partners are encouraging all Vermont communities to develop tree emergency plans.

Burlington Looks Down at Its Canopy

Vermont's largest community, the city of Burlington, gets an "A" for its public tree management. However, what about the care and condition of the trees outside its authority? Is Burlington missing opportunities to preserve and enhance the overall tree cover in the city? To help answer these questions, the city teamed up with the University of Vermont's Spatial Analysis Lab and the U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station to conduct a detailed urban tree canopy assessment using the latest geospatial technologies. The assessment, which was partially funded by a grant from the State's Trees for Local Community program, provided the city with percentages of tree canopy cover and potential tree canopy cover down to the parcel level. It also provided a breakdown of where canopy cover enhancement possibilities exist within different ownerships and land use types. For example, residential properties in Burlington have the greatest opportunity to increase canopy cover, while industrial properties have the greatest need. What will the city do with this information? They are currently developing a climate action plan, and the assessment is being used as the baseline to look for opportunities to increase the current canopy cover of 39 percent as well as identify methods to preserve and enhance existing cover. The city has recognized the valuable ecosystem services their urban forest provides and is considering all mechanisms to amplify them.



This map delineates ground cover types for the city of Burlington.