

2008 Accomplishment Report – Wisconsin

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Introduction

The mission of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) urban forestry program is to encourage, enable, and enhance sound management of Wisconsin's urban forest ecosystems. The DNR provides urban forestry technical, financial, and promotional assistance to local and tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and other interested groups through its Urban Forestry Working Group. Led by a State coordinator, a grant manager, six regional coordinators (one position is currently vacant), and seven half-time specialists (two are currently vacant), statewide policy development and implementation are managed with a team approach in partnership with the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council (WUFC).

Critical Issues and Key Accomplishments

Emerald Ash Borer

Regular meetings of the emerald ash borer (EAB) multiagency advisory group and its operations, communication, and science subteams focused efforts on directing policy and resource development. Joint meetings with Wisconsin DNR Urban Forestry & Forest Health; Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (WDATCP); University of Wisconsin Extension; USDA Animal and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS); and the U.S. Forest Service identified issues and progress by all agencies.

Wisconsin EAB Response Plan – In June 2008 the secretaries of WDNR and WDATCP approved an updated Wisconsin Emerald Ash Borer Response Plan. The plan describes a range of possible management steps and recommends balancing any recommended treatment with environmental impacts, land ownership, cost, sociological impacts, size of the infestation, and traditional ecological knowledge. The response plan is available at <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/fh/pdf/WIEABResponsePlan.pdf>.

Wisconsin urban forestry staff coordinated or contributed to a wide variety of resource development and outreach efforts, including revision of the EAB Toolkit for Wisconsin Communities, focusing the annual workshops on EAB, holding destructive tree sampling demonstrations, and displaying at public events and festivals.

The identification of EAB in Wisconsin occurred outside the reporting year; however, the find and the initial actions that followed are provided in this report. On July 29, 2008, APHIS positively identified EAB in Ozaukee County. This was the first detection of EAB in Wisconsin. On August 6, EAB was also detected 1.5 miles away in Washington County. On August 7, the WDATCP established a quarantine area for EAB, which included Ozaukee, Washington, Fond du Lac, and Sheboygan Counties.

Following the find, the agencies have worked together with partners to delimit the population and provide information and consultation to government leaders, businesses, green professionals, and the public through a press conference and press releases, public meetings, training sessions, publications, and status reports. The Incident Command System was instigated to manage the process. Recommendations on management strategies are expected in early 2009.

The find has re-energized communities to actually use the toolkit to prepare for EAB, which continues to be a major focus of the program. The toolkit is available at <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/uf/eab> or visit Wisconsin's EAB portal for current information at <http://emeraldashborer.wi.gov/>.

Flooding

There is long-term concern with loss of trees from the June 2008 flooding. More than 330 communities were included in the Federal disaster declaration and many had standing water for weeks. The trees that didn't die outright will need to be closely monitored for problems and safety concerns for several years. In addition to dealing with tree issues, urban forestry staff members were part of the Incident Management Teams assisting with volunteer coordination for flood relief.

Urban Forestry Advocacy

The WUFC continues to serve as a statewide voice for critical issues impacting urban and community forestry. In response to mounting threats, including diminishing tree canopy, global warming, cuts in Federal Forest Service support, and emerald ash borer, the council presented its first report to the State forester and secretary of the DNR. The "State of the Wisconsin Urban Forest" not only outlines critical threats facing the urban forest resource but recommends actions, including the Wisconsin Community Canopy Initiative - 20 Million by 2020. The timely publication of *Urban Forests of Wisconsin: Pilot Monitoring Project 2002* by the U.S. Forest Service provided valuable quantifiable data upon which the council was able to base its recommendations. The WUFC report is available at <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/UF/council/>.

Council members continued to strengthen strategic alliances by maintaining dialog with stakeholders, congressional officials in Washington, D.C., and statewide leaders. The council was represented on the Governor's Global Warming Task Force's working group on forestry and agriculture and was successful in introducing an urban forestry template (Wisconsin Community Canopy Initiative - 20 Million by 2020) that was supported by two separate working groups and included in the final report to the Governor. The Governor's Global Warming Task Force Report is available at <http://dnr.wi.gov/environmentprotect/gtfgw/>.

Legislation

2007 Wisconsin Act 13 gave the WDNR statutory authority to expedite urban forestry grants to communities following catastrophic storm damage in an urban area for which the governor has declared a state of emergency (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2007/data/acts/07Act13.pdf>). WDNR staff developed rules to administer the new grant program. The permanent rule is expected to pass in early 2009. Since the rule was drafted, two Wisconsin communities have applied for funding.

Leadership and Networking

The annual urban forestry conference attracted more than 570 participants. The WUFC's proposed 20 Million by 2020 initiative was the theme of the conference and marked the first time a DNR secretary opened the conference. Presentations on tree production, marketing, planting, and funding highlighted the conference.

The curriculum for the Wisconsin Tree Institute was developed by WDNR staff. The Tree Institute will offer urban forestry training to untrained municipal tree managers. The Tree Institute will be an adaptation of the Community Tree Management Institute, offered in Oregon and Texas. Training is scheduled to take place in 2009.

Milwaukee County Parks, Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens, Friends of Wehr Nature Center, and UW-Extension worked together on an Arbor Day celebration in Whitnall Park in Milwaukee. Funding from a WDNR Urban Forestry Grant helped support the 2-day event that attracted nearly 2,000 visitors. The organizations are planning to expand the event for 2009 and are working to include four neighboring communities to join them for a combined Arbor Day celebration.

Urban Forest Assessment

Through a partnership with WDNR and UW Stevens Point, work was completed to establish a spatial layer of Wisconsin’s urban forest boundary. This will be used for both a proposed continuous urban forest inventory and to plot community program data that are currently being gathered by a statewide survey. The survey results will be available in early 2009. The continuous urban forest inventory is on hold because of State and Federal budget restrictions.

Statistical Highlights

Managing and Developing Communities	302
Population of Participating Communities	3,166,965
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours)	10,659