

2009 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 FY2009, the DCR continued to offer 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 FY2002, 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 FY2009, 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.

In FY2009, the DCR also completed construction of a new Web-based community status reporting system that will be accessible to the general public and serve as a clearinghouse of community forestry program information for each community in the Commonwealth. The Web site for this system is located at <http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/dcr/forestry/forestry23.html>.

The Town of Sturbridge hosted our annual Tree City USA forum and awards ceremony at the Olde Sturbridge Village, a private, colonial re-enactment site. The event was sponsored by National Grid Utility Corporation and Lewis Tree Service. The forum included a presentation by Dr. John O'Keefe of the Harvard Forest, who discussed his research into the history of land use changes in Massachusetts over the past several centuries. The Commissioner of the DCR, Rick Sullivan, presided over the awarding of 92 Tree City USA awards and 2 Tree Line USA awards.

In FY09, the 18 communities that took advantage of the statewide inventory system offered by the DCR and Davey Research 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. At the end of the fiscal year, the DCR extended the license agreement for this system to provide the program to participating communities for another full year.

In FY09, 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 our 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 Northeast Urban 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 U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station.

In FY09, two major occurrences preoccupied much of the U&CF program staff time and energy. Massachusetts DCR hosted the National Association of State Forester's conference in Hyannis, MA, and the Urban Forestry Program staff was charged with managing the preparations for the meeting. Although hosting this event was a great opportunity for the State to showcase local forestry practices, coordinating the meeting proved to be extremely time consuming, and the delivery of regular U&CF program offerings was necessarily reduced.

Also in FY09, an infestation of Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) was discovered in Worcester, MA. The DCR Bureau of Forestry, including the U&CF Program, designated the response to the presence of this potentially devastating invader as the top priority for all Bureau personnel. U&CF program staff participated in all phases of the response including survey, removal, and quarantine enforcement. In addition, the U&CF staff worked closely with the U.S. Forest Service to design a reforestation plan that has been funded and is being implemented presently. U&CF staff have been tasked with the management of the reforestation effort including implementation and oversight of all field reforestation activities as well as the preparation and design of future reforestation efforts (including design and implementation of a successfully funded ARRA stimulus grant). The response to ALB has consumed a large percentage of the DCR U&CF staff time and has forced a reprioritization of DCR U&CF program goals. It is anticipated that this will be the case for the foreseeable future of the program.

Grants

In FY2009, the DCR awarded \$390,000 to 19 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.

In FY2009, the DCR funded the following exemplary Urban Forestry Challenge Grants:

City of Lowell - \$17,500 Grant/\$17,500 match: A grant to fund a comprehensive inventory of all of the street trees in the city of Lowell and incorporate the data into a GIS management system.

Town of Amherst - \$15,000 Grant/\$15,000 match: A grant to complete a public shade tree inventory in the most densely developed, priority areas of the Town. This inventory will form the basis for a community forest management plan.

Town of Norton - \$4,500 Grant/\$4,802 match: A grant to prepare forest management plans for creation of demonstration forests at Lincoln Woods and the Town Forest (both municipally owned properties). These plans would be used to advocate for and implement salvage harvests and thinning on the two parcels to generate income for the Town and educate the public about proper forest management techniques.

Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ (MACUCC)- \$5,000 Match/\$12,500 matching: A grant to continue development of the Mass ReLeaf Ministry program developed as a partnership between the DCR and the MACUCC. This program funds the development and implementation of tree planting projects run by local religious organizations in the most heavily developed and poorest communities of the State. The program is ecumenical in nature and is implemented by volunteers in the religious organizations who work in cooperation with their local community leaders to develop and carry out projects. The projects are open to volunteers from any organization and community members in general. These grant funds will be used to support projects planned for the spring and fall of 2009.

Friends of Pulaski Park, Holyoke - \$6,450 Grant/\$6,450 match: A grant to provide for professional arboricultural care of Heritage Trees in historic Pulaski Park. Twelve trees have been identified and professionally assessed for their arboricultural needs.

Town of Bedford - \$5,000 Grant/\$7,000 match: A grant to fund a public shade tree inventory of the main downtown section of the Town.

Town of Norton - \$15,000 Grant/\$3,750 local match: A grant to plant 73 trees along Newcomb Street to replace trees removed as part of the National Grid ACT Hazard Tree removal program.

Town of Lenox - \$10,000 Grant/\$2,500 local match: A grant to plant 18 trees along Newcomb Street to replace trees removed as part of the National Grid ACT Hazard Tree removal program. The grant will also provide professional arboricultural care for significant trees on public property.

State Urban and Community Forestry Council

In FY09, the Advisory Board supported the DCR program by participating in grant reviews.

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:	4,087,594
Number of Volunteer Hours:	10,100