

# 2009 Accomplishment Report – New Jersey

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## Introduction

The New Jersey Community Forestry Program is a unique partnership between government, business, and volunteers caring for trees where people live, work, and play. Under the authority provided by the State legislature within the Community Forestry Assistance Act (P.L. 1996, Chapter 135), the program encourages, promotes, and assists cities and towns in the establishment, retention, and enhancement of trees and forest resources. The Community Forestry program is dedicated to making communities more livable by providing grants, technical assistance, training, and volunteer opportunities. The program continues to seek leading edge opportunities and innovative initiatives to build a sustainable statewide effort to manage local, publicly owned trees and forest. Through the use of Federal Urban and Community Forestry funding, the goal of having a statewide community forestry initiative is ensuing.

## Key Accomplishments

The New Jersey State Community Forestry Program has reached a key and important milestone. With the support of Federal Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) funds, the State will eclipse the 50 percent mark in the number of communities having or working on a Community Forestry Management Plan. The significance in reaching this number will permit the program to market and advertise the fact that more communities will be covered by the Community Forestry Assistance Act than not. This milestone will aid the New Jersey Community Forestry Council with the marketing of the program to the legislature and to towns and cities not yet participating in the program.

New Jersey leads all Northeastern States with 156 Tree City USA Communities and 27 Tree City Growth Awards. New Jersey also ranked 5th in the Nation with the number of Tree City USA Communities right behind the larger States of Ohio, Illinois, Florida, and California. The National Arbor Day Foundation also reported that New Jersey was number one in the country with 10 new Tree City USA Communities. The jump in Tree City activities is a reflection of both the continued support from the Federal UCF program and a growth in the active cities and towns under the Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act.

New Jersey's tree removal ordinances came under assault from a regional builders association. The action of the builders association through the court system at first caused the Jackson Township tree ordinance to be found prejudiced against builders and was thrown out. This caused a tremendous ripple effect all across New Jersey with other tree removal ordinances coming under the same scrutiny. Many communities started

to resolve their ordinances so they would not be sued by the building profession. With the assistance of New Jersey's Community Forestry Program and other leading tree organizations in the State, a new ordinance was drafted using tree canopy cover and a link to the Community Forestry Assistance Act. As a result, the New Jersey Supreme Court, after several appeals, found in favor of the Township and upheld the right of a municipality to have a tree removal ordinance as long as it is fair to both residents and builders.

In cooperation with the New Jersey League of Municipalities, the Mayor's Committee for a Green Future, and the Municipal Land Use Center at the College of New Jersey, the Community Forestry Program assisted in the development of "Sustainable Jersey." This certification program is for municipalities that want to go green, control costs and save money, and take steps to sustain their quality of life over the long term. The involvement of the Community Forestry Program was to provide benchmarks that towns and cities could obtain in the Natural Resources category under the Trees and Woodlands section. Towns can obtain up to 20 points by having a Community Forestry Management Plan, an ordinance, and on-the-ground tree activities. Participation in the certification program permits a town to obtain a prestigious designation for the municipality and a demonstration to residents that the town is really going green!

The State Arbor Day Event highlighted that community forestry can occur in all New Jersey towns, even the very rural ones. Trees were planted in the Town of Tewksbury, New Jersey, a 24-square-mile rural community. Highlighted during the event was Tewksbury's Community Forestry Management Plan that has guided the town in its tree activities. With the help of over 250 volunteers, 100 new trees and shrubs were planted in four parks around the Township. The event emphasized the use of trees to contribute to New Jersey's effort to deal with the global climate change issue. As in years past, Tree City USA awards were handed out along with the Joyce Kilmer Award and the annual Arbor Day student contest awards. Governor Jon Corzine signed a State proclamation noting the effort to address urban heat islands and environmental benefit through the planting of trees.

This was the 13th consecutive year for "Celebrate Arbor Day New Jersey!" and "Make a Difference with Trees!" projects. Both continue to surpass all expectations. Five hundred groups planted 38,500 trees and over 50,000 tree-tube seedlings.



A "before" shot of a tree-less street in Camden, NJ.



The "after" shot of the same block with newly planted trees.



Another “before” shot of a tree-less street in Camden, NJ.



Volunteers plant trees in Camden.



Volunteers enjoy the rewards of a job well done after a tree planting.

### Statistical Highlights

Number of Participating Communities:	347
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	39,777
Number of Tree City USA Communities:	156
Number of Growth Awards:	27
Number of Managing Communities:	201
Number of Developing Communities:	146
Population of Participating Communities:	6,575,161
Number of Communities with Advocacy/ Advisory Organizations:	397
Number of UCF Grants:	84
Number of Selected Communities for New Jersey:	566 (100%)