

2009 Accomplishment Report – New York

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Introduction

The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program in New York State is as varied as the State's people and geography, which ranges from densely populated areas downstate to rural and forested landscapes upstate. The program's goal is to empower communities to plan and manage their own green resources. Program managers continue to inform communities, agencies, not-for-profit groups, and citizens about the values of urban and community forestry. Training, tools, consultation, and technical support are made available to community leaders and volunteers. The Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Urban and Community Forestry Cost-Share Grant Program, which is supported by the Federal program, is a community incentive that funds projects in support of tree planting and care, partnerships, and public awareness of the importance of urban trees. In 2008-2009, the New York grant program funded 46 community grants totaling near \$900,000. Although the fiscal condition of New York State prevented the contracts from being awarded, contracts have since received approval for release, allowing these communities to move forward with spring and fall 2010 projects. The NY U&CF Program encourages State environmental quality and energy agencies to evaluate and utilize urban tree planting and care efforts in their comprehensive strategies to mitigate environmental problems.

Staff and Community Volunteers Work Together

New York State's urban forestry program grew in new directions while maintaining and enhancing staff development and training. Regional volunteer ReLeaf committees gained members through recruiting and programming. Long Island ReLeafers encouraged growth with their own recruitment and work toward maintaining and increasing the urban forest canopy. Networking, interaction, and sharing of services resulted from new partnerships statewide.

Consulting partners and volunteers have developed a program with National Grid on hazardous trees, netting attendance across the State. Other workshops included "Tools of the Trade" held in four locations, Tree Campus U.S.A. Training, and "Storms over the Urban Forests." Over 500 persons, including municipal staffers, certified arborists, elected officials, and landscape architects, attended these workshops organized largely by volunteers. The volunteers accomplished these goals with the help of regional and central office staff and through the members of the New York State Urban and Community Forestry Council.

Regional and Central Office Staff continue to serve and support the PlaNYC, One Million Tree Advisory Boards of outreach, stewardship, and research. The One Million Trees initiative is a public/private partnership with nonprofits and volunteers joining to plant 1 million trees in 10 years. Subcommittees will

serve all facets of this movement. To date, over 285,000 trees have been planted, and numerous nonprofits trained hundreds of citizen stewards to take care of New York City's newly planted trees.

Key Accomplishments

Urban Forestry Conference – Environmental Justice Tour and Green Infrastructure Project

The 2009 ReLeaf Conference was sponsored by Region 2 ReLeaf and the New York State Urban and Community Forestry Council. For 3 days, 265 urban environmentalists from across New York State gathered at the Pratt Institute campus in Brooklyn to participate in a series of activities including workshops, tours, ceremonies, and a picnic under the Brooklyn Bridge. Headline speakers were Rohit Arguwala, Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC creator, and 2007 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Dr. Stuart Gaffin of Columbia University, who awed the audience of urban forestry enthusiasts with their presentations relating to improving the quality of life for New Yorkers.



The opening ceremony with welcoming speakers included Adrian Benepe, Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks & Recreation; Margarita Lopez, Commissioner, NYC Housing Authority; Suzanne Mattei, Regional Director, NYSDEC Region 2; Patricia Tobin, Council President; and Incoming President Christian Mercurio, NYS Urban & Community Forestry Council.

Fifteen workshops were given in the categories of research, Best Management Practices, and community area projects. The conference planning committee received a grant to help defray the costs of the two Environmental Justice tours of the Pennsylvania and Fountain Avenue Landfills and the Newtown Creek Revitalization project. These funds were used to pay the registration fees of community leaders, street tree advocates, and other volunteers who otherwise would not be able to afford the conference registration fee.



Fishkill Creek Watershed Committee (FCWC)

[The] Region 3 forester and volunteers participated in ongoing networking for this year's partnerships with watershed groups to replant riparian buffers with stream and wildlife friendly DEC seedlings. [They also] continued project organizing and planning for Creek Week in Dutchess County during the summer months. DEC lead a tree interpretive riparian walk for the public on the lower reaches of the creek corridor and has done canoe reconnaissance of the middle section of creek for the planned public canoe/kayak day trip in July. This work was done in partnership with the city of Beacon, FCWC, and local environmental organizations.



Local Training

Coordinator Mary Kramarchyk and forestry staff from the U.S. Forest Service Durham Field Office helped conduct training at a 5-day training session on urban forestry programs and inventories at the Bartlett Arboretum. Attendees signed up to participate in the training arranged by Westchester County Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) in a creative training experience to improve municipal tree care. Fifteen participants took the 5-day training course with other speakers, including Dr. Nina Bassuk (planting, site assessment, and introduction to soils); Mark Chisholm (equipment and safe work practices); Dr. Richard Weir (intro to pruning and identifying trees of concern); and Lou Sebesta (urban forestry resources in the Hudson Valley). Completing this course provides the attendees with a certification in basic tree care, an introduction to tree care technology, and the confidence to conduct learned practices in the field. To date, Westchester CCE has trained 45 municipal tree stewards.

Tree Board and Ordinance Advocacy

Central staff and Region 7 staff (Syracuse, NY) met with the town of Dewitt Supervisor, the Dewitt Advisory Conservation Committee, and the Town board and made presentations about the benefits of having a tree board and how to participate in the Tree City U.S.A. program. Region 7 ReLeaf member Ann Sullivan organized the meeting. Ann is the chair of the tree committee currently working to pass a tree protective ordinance and form a tree commission by law. Their tree commission would then have the advisory authority in helping select and protect the urban forest throughout the town. Forester John Graham provided a local resource to Dewitt and will be meeting with them soon to further these goals.

Statistical Highlights

Number of NY Communities that Have, or Have Potential to Develop, Programs:	765
Number of People Living in Communities Provided Assistance:	13,137,355
Number of People Living in Communities Developing Programs:	2,966,011
Number of People Living in Managed Communities:	10,171,344
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	275,015
Tree City USA Communities (Recertifying):	96
Tree City USA Growth Awards:	10
Tree Line USA Utilities:	5