

2009 Accomplishment Report – West Virginia

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Introduction

The West Virginia Urban and Community Forestry Program began in 1991 with the mission of encouraging municipal governments to begin providing long-term care for trees on public property across West Virginia. Three positions comprise the full-time urban forestry staff that delivers the program statewide to cities and towns. The Urban Forestry Coordinator, Bob Hannah, is responsible for overall program administration. The Technical Specialist, Jennifer Brashears, educates community tree care providers with a variety of skills and knowledge necessary to successfully manage their urban forest. The Partnership Coordinator, Andy Sheetz, develops financial partnerships with corporate sponsors to fund community tree care activities as well as coordinates volunteer programs.

Major emphasis was placed on the West Virginia Forest Resource Assessment, the Cool Community Initiative, and expanding Project CommuniTree during the past year. The assessment of urban forest resources yielded the following sub-issues: building program capacity, climate change mitigation and energy conservation, population dynamics and resource allocation, air quality, public drinking water supply, and recreation. We have added a GIS Specialist to our staff and are currently analyzing GIS data to determine priority areas for each urban forestry sub-issue. Successes with the Cool Community Initiative and Project CommuniTree are described in the Key Accomplishments section.

West Virginia Urban and Community Forestry Program Components

Grants and Resource Assistance

- Demonstration City Grants
- Cool Community Grants
- Mountaineer Treeways Grants

Awareness and Outreach

- Chesapeake Bay Forester
- Tree City USA
- Personal Contacts

Technical Assistance

- Technical Specialist
- Workshops and Training
- Educational Material

Partnerships

- Municipal Tree Restoration Program
- Corporate Sponsorship

Volunteer Participation

- Tree Advocacy Organizations
- Mountaineer Treeways Seedlings

Key Accomplishments

Title: 2009 Cool Community Initiative and WVU Research

Location: Statewide

Objectives: Energy conservation, Strategic tree planting, Research, and Building program capacity

Our Cool Community initiative was funded by a U.S. Forest Service Redesign grant and designed to facilitate the strategic planting of trees in core urban areas. The primary goal of this initiative is to utilize well-placed trees to achieve a reduction of energy demands for heating and cooling. Additional objectives include: climate change buffering, engaging community leaders and citizens in urban forest enhancement, building the capacity of local tree boards and citizen groups, enhancing economic vitality, and working to achieve canopy cover goals in communities with limited resources for tree planting.

Four communities benefitted from the initiative this past year with remaining funds to be allocated in the current fiscal year. The Town of Bath planted 30 trees in an area with significant impervious surface area with a \$6,500 Cool Community subgrant. Their project involved canopy planning assistance from WVU and financial support from local businesses and volunteers, generating \$7,188 in matching funds.

Bluefield received a \$6,120 subgrant resulting in the planting of 47 cooling trees in the business district while leveraging a local match of \$7,387. Elkins utilized its \$12,000 subgrant to establish 27 trees downtown to shade buildings and sidewalks. Summersville completed a \$6,000 subgrant project resulting in the planting of 64 trees to shade four parking lots.

A \$5,000 grant was awarded to WVU to assess the benefits from canopy increases through the Cool Community Initiative. A graduate student selected two representative sites in the cities of Parkersburg and Clarksburg. The Parkersburg site has an average canopy cover of 24 percent and the site in Clarksburg just 9 percent. Scanning color infrared imagery was used to assess existing tree cover and UFORE is being utilized to ascertain tree benefits. UFORE analysis has revealed that a Cool Community Initiative that increases canopy cover by as little as 15 percent will yield an annual pollution reduction benefit of \$5,681 and an annual carbon avoidance benefit of \$889, and reduce cooling costs by \$16,773 each year. Additional research will continue in the current fiscal year.

Title: Mountaineer Treeways Project

Location: Martinsburg Veterans Administration Hospital

Objectives: Mitigating heat islands, Tree planting, and Building capacity

In 2009 the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Martinsburg, WV, participated in the Mountaineer Treeways Program. The focus of the project was to establish a tree nursery on site that would provide the hospital's campus with a sustainable source of trees. Scott Rheam, the project's director, was instrumental in getting the maintenance department involved in the care and management of the hospital's trees. Department staff attended a tree pruning workshop, presented by the West Virginia Division of Forestry, and is receiving assistance with assessing the maintenance needs for the facility's trees.



Scott Rheam, project director, looks over the tree seedlings planted through the Mountaineer Treeways Program.



Tree nursery at the VA Medical Center in Martinsburg, WV.

Despite late summer drought and constant threat of animal damage, the nursery saw an 86 percent tree seedling survival rate. Proper planting and tree care have helped the facility take a step toward realizing its tree canopy goals. Trees grown in the nursery will be used to shade parking lots, hospital facilities, and walking trails. Plans are underway for the hospital to participate in additional grants and programs offered by the West Virginia Division of Forestry. These opportunities would allow the Medical Center to inventory its trees and provide hands-on training for veterans and their families.

The hospital's directors have also recognized the benefits of the emerging tree care program. The facility has embraced a holistic approach to managing its landscape and works to incorporate forestry and wildlife experiences into what it offers for patients. Although future facility expansion and upgrades will impact established trees, a plan is being developed to minimize tree loss and achieve canopy cover goals.

Title: Potomac Valley CommuniTree

Location: Eastern Panhandle

Objectives: Tree planting, Climate change buffering, Fostering municipal tree care, Program building, and Technical assistance

The West Virginia Project CommuniTree (WVPC) Program saw additional success in 2009 with both outreach and expansion. The WVPC hosted two tree planting seminars that resulted in establishing 128 trees and training 193 volunteers. The program leveraged nearly \$5,000 from local donations. This spring the program partnered with the city of Romney and the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind to celebrate Arbor Day. Nearly 100 community volunteers and school students came out to attend the tree planting seminar, which focused on tree selection and planting in urban areas as well as tree planting for riparian enhancement.

News of the program has spread quickly. In early 2009 the counties of Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan came together to form the Eastern Panhandle Chapter of WVPC. This chapter is currently working on developing Flowing Springs Park located in Ranson, WV. During 2009, the WVPC advisory panel worked to develop a program mission, goals, and focus areas. The panel also developed a presentation for newly forming chapters to assist them with project startup. A program handbook is also being developed to assist chapter members with design and implementation of projects. There is interest in the formation of additional chapters, and 2010 projects are currently being planned. The CommuniTree program has proven to be a great asset to West Virginia's urban forestry program through its interdisciplinary focus and ability to bring volunteers together on a regional level.



2009 Gold Leaf Award Winner Carla Hardy takes part in a Baker Park Project CommuniTree event.



Volunteers of all ages participated in the Project CommuniTree Arbor Day in Romney, WV.



2009 West Virginia Arbor Day Poster Contest Winner Johnna Dunbar poses with a 5th grade class from Mountain View Elementary.



2009 Arbor Day at Ranson Middle School

Statistical Highlights

Managing Communities:	6
Developing Communities:	40
Participating Communities:	53
Population Impacted:	381,675
Volunteer Hours Generated:	3,038
Tree City USA Communities:	15
Tree City Growth Awards:	3
Trees Planted:	3,574
Training Hours Provided:	1,789



2009 Arbor Day at South Jefferson Middle School