Urban and Community Forestry Program
2010 Accomplishment Report – Maine

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Introduction

Project Canopy, Maine's Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) program, heightens public awareness of the community forest—what it is and why it is important. The program promotes comprehensive community forest management and builds and supports sustainable local community forestry programs.

Issues and Opportunities

In today's economically challenging times, it is not surprising that municipalities identified lack of funding as the greatest obstacle to managing their community forest resources (37 percent) as part of the 2009 Project Canopy municipal survey. Assistance with grant development was the most requested service as a part of the same survey. Declining Federal funding for the UCF program minimizes the number and amount of third party grants Project Canopy is able to offer to those municipalities that need support. Program staff is working diligently to diversify our funding base, and have made small gains toward matching our Federal allocation with local dollars. That said, core Federal funding is an essential component of our support for local communities in developing basic program function through tree planting, inventory and management, and capacity building. Demand is on the rise for these services, and with it, the need for more funding.

Key Accomplishments

In the past year, Project Canopy has worked diligently with the Viles Arboretum to begin diversification of our funding base. We have made small gains toward matching our Federal allocation with local dollars through some State grant programs as well as partnerships with local business. This process will continue in the upcoming year as we work toward the goal of developing a full fundraising strategy to privatize specific Project Canopy programs. As part of this strategy, we are working with a private marketing and development firm to refine the Project Canopy marketing message to take to both local businesses and large corporations with an interest in Maine's urban and community forests.

Funding
In 2010, Maine's Project Canopy Assistance Program funded three grants to communities and organizations. The primary focus of these three projects was education and outreach. Competitive Project Canopy grants were withheld during FY10 due to lack of funding as well as timing of U.S. Forest Service Redesign grant awards. The competitive grants program will resume in FY11.

Training
Project Canopy continues to prioritize education and training for volunteers and city staff. An educated citizenry is the most effective tool in creating viable, sustainable local urban and community forestry programs. In 2010 Project Canopy worked with State and regional partners to deliver training to 588 adult program participants. Educational and outreach programs reached an additional 645 youth participants. The Maine Forest Service staff maintains strong partnerships with complementary State agencies such as the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Maine Department of Agriculture. Project Canopy staff worked collaboratively with MDOT to design and implement a new series of workshops aimed at local road officials dealing with tree issues. Two workshops were held in southern Maine with 60 road commissioners, tree wardens, city arborists, and public works crews in attendance. Three additional workshops were scheduled for the fall of 2010. Project Canopy staff also helped the Maine Department of Agriculture deliver the "Forest Pest Outreach and Survey Project" in which we conducted surveys in the cities of Bangor and Portland. In addition to insect detection, the surveys served as an outreach tool to educate the public about the significance of invasive forest pests. The events were covered extensively in the media.

Community Projects
Town of Yarmouth
Never in their wildest dreams could the Herbie Project Committee members have imagined the outpouring of interest and support for the removal and reuse of New England's largest American elm, located in Yarmouth. Together with Yarmouth Community Services and the support of the Maine Forest Service, the town established a Tree Trust to accept donations for replanting street trees lost throughout town. Through both the sales of t-shirts and donations, the town has recovered the cost of Herbie's removal, transport, and processing of the wood at a sawmill, which totaled nearly $20,000. Sales of Herbie wood have begun, first with the green, or undried, wood that is preferred by wood turners for bowls, pens, platters, and vases. The first day of sales brought in over $3,000. Estimates for the sale of the wood range up to $200,000! Artisans can either purchase the wood outright or decide to participate in the Herbie benefit sale, in which case they receive the wood for free. Proceeds from the auction held November 13, 2010, will be split 60/40 between the artist and the trust.

These are some of the handmade items produced from "Herbie" wood sold at the Yarmouth, ME, Clam Festival. (Platter by Peter Asslyn, bowl by Ann Prescott)

City of Portland

Evergreen Cemetery is a park-like cemetery with an additional 111 acres of woodlands managed by the city of Portland, ME. A well-used stopover for migrant birds, Evergreen is known throughout the area as a birding hotspot. The woods are also used by dog-walkers, joggers, and cross-country skiers who take advantage of the trails that meander through the forests. The city received a Project Canopy Grant in 2007 to create forest management plans for its several forested properties, including Evergreen. The plan, completed in December 2008, recommended thinning several sections of forest in Evergreen to reduce competition and to release large trees that will ultimately become specimen trees as the cemetery expands to use the forested land.

Although forestry is a fundamental component of the Maine economy, many people in the urban areas of southern Maine have a negative image of forestry and perceive it as a solely destructive force that deteriorates the natural environment. Many people remain unaware that if harvesting is conducted properly, it can promote forest health and can even benefit wildlife. Conservation-minded individuals, like many birders, are particularly opposed to forestry activities. Based on strong birder opposition to tree removal at another Portland city park recently, it seemed likely that strong opposition to harvesting at Evergreen might limit or prevent carrying out the activities recommended in the management plan.

In order to engage the birding community and keep all interested parties informed, Project Canopy organized the "Evergreen Cemetery Forest Birding Project" to recruit area birders to monitor the bird populations in the forest throughout the seasons before and after harvesting activities. Birders were recruited through press releases and postings on the Maine bird list-serve. On April 1, Project Canopy and the city of Portland hosted a guided walk through the Evergreen Cemetery forest to orient birders with respect to the location of the transects and to discuss the management plan's recommendations. Project Canopy staff members Jan Santerre and Laura Zitske guided the approximately 20 volunteers along with city arborist Jeff Tarling, Maine Forest Service District Forester Ken Canfield, and licensed forester Rene Noel, who wrote the management plan. Participants were initially wary of harvesting, and the walk gave foresters the opportunity to educate attendees about how this plan intends to improve forest health. Participants were eager to contribute to the project and play a role in monitoring birds throughout the process. Birders that attended the walk ultimately recruited additional birders to participate in the project.

Birding training was held at Evergreen Cemetery in Portland, ME.

Volunteers have been reporting their findings on http://ebird.org, a birding Web site hosted by the Cornell Bird Laboratory and National Audubon. The Web site hosts added the birding project's transects to their maps, allowing volunteers to identify exactly where observations were made, in addition to recording date, time, effort, and other information in a regulated database. Most observations were recorded in spring when migrating birds (and birders) are most active, but data points continue to come in. Fifty-two bird species have already been identified by volunteers along the transects, with hopefully more to come before the harvesting efforts start in the winter.

Statistical Highlights

Number of Managing Communities:	28
Number of Developing Communities:	100
Number of People Living in Communities provided with Educational, Technical, and/or Financial Assistance:	872,543
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	6,567
Tree City USA Communities:	17
Tree City USA Growth Awards:	2