

# Urban and Community Forestry Program

## 2010 Accomplishment Report – Pennsylvania

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### Introduction

The Pennsylvania Urban & Community Forestry Program is a partnership among the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, Penn State Extension Program, and Pennsylvania Community Forests (a.k.a. Pennsylvania Urban and Community Forestry Council), with financial and technical support from the U.S. Forest Service. The mission of the program is to assist communities in developing comprehensive and sustainable urban forestry programs for the purpose of enhancing quality of life.

### Key Accomplishments

#### TreeVitalize Accomplishments – Statewide

The TreeVitalize Program is still going strong and is now available in all 13 metropolitan areas of the State. The program offers communities in the 23 most densely populated counties of the State the opportunity to significantly build their urban forestry programs. Partnerships that existed before have been strengthened and new ones have developed.

Federal funding has enabled the State to continue to retain the services of four highly experienced urban foresters, employed through the Penn State University Extension Service. These individuals have been key to the urban forestry program in Pennsylvania for nearly 20 years, and have been vital to the success of the TreeVitalize Program.

In each metropolitan area, a county or regional government entity serves as a “Metro Partner” to administer the TreeVitalize program locally. Representatives from the Department of Natural Resources (DCNR) and Penn State Extension collaborate with the Metro Partner to review requests and award funding for community projects. Through these partnerships, TreeVitalize is tying urban forestry into other county conservation and planning initiatives.

A partnership between Penn State Extension Foresters and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society that spans many years has resulted in the educational program called “Tree Tenders®.” Attendance at this 8-hour workshop is mandatory for TreeVitalize funding, and both citizen volunteers and municipal staff must participate. Basic tree biology, tree planting, and tree care are taught through a series of lectures and field demonstrations. In addition, participants are armed with knowledge about the many benefits trees provide and with the resources to help them inform others.

TreeVitalize has been supported since 2004 primarily with State funding—\$5 million from the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and an additional \$2.5 million from the Department of Environmental Protection. Generous support has also come from foundations such as Alcoa, Arbor Day, Home Depot, William Penn, and Mellon as well as from corporate sponsors such as Aqua America and Plow and Hearth. To date, 220,000 trees have been planted through the program. These include caliper trees along streets and in public parks and green spaces, as well as seedlings planted where riparian buffers are needed along streams.

Support for TreeVitalize has also come from three different public radio stations in the State, which provide a percentage of their member contributions each season to plant trees. Five plantings have occurred to date at public parks where a riparian buffer was needed. These media events provide good publicity and the opportunity for community engagement in resource conservation.

Over the last year, more than 3,000 caliper trees have been planted in the greater Philadelphia area, and approximately 2,000 in the city of Pittsburgh. In addition, since the State began launching the program 2 years ago (fall 2008) in the smaller metropolitan areas, grants have been awarded to 84 communities to plant over 6,600 trees.

Over the last year a successful coupon program has been started with corporate funding in a four-county area, with private funding, to provide \$15 consumer discounts for the purchase of a tree. TreeVitalize splits the cost of the discount with the nursery. To date, 20 nurseries are participating, and consumer awareness and participation have increased dramatically each season. Coupons are available at the nurseries or can be downloaded from the Web site [www.treevitalize.net](http://www.treevitalize.net). The number of coupons redeemed to date in fall 2010 is approximately 700, as compared to 63 at this time last year. Two months remain for fall 2010 reporting as of this writing, so a total in excess of 1,000 is likely for the season.

### **Urban Tree Canopy Assessments**

The State has made significant progress in completing urban tree canopy (UTC) assessments over the last year. After IKONOS imagery was purchased in 2007 for four small communities in northeast Pennsylvania, collectively referred to as “the Abingtons,” no further progress was made in conducting the UTC assessment until the State was able to contract with the Spatial Analysis Lab (SAL) at the University of Vermont in 2008. Further progress was then delayed until LiDAR imagery was available for those counties.

In 2009 IKONOS imagery was acquired for State College, PA, and with LiDAR data available for Centre County, the SAL was able to complete the analysis for State College. In 2010 LiDAR imagery became available for most of the rest of the State, and the SAL was able to complete the analysis of the Abingtons.

In spring 2010, the State used Federal funds from the Chesapeake Bay Program to hire a Chesapeake Bay Forester with knowledge and skills in using GIS systems. He has been able to work closely with the SAL to utilize the data generated through the UTC analyses to help communities prioritize planting locations and begin to set canopy goals.

### **Chesapeake Bay Watershed TMDL Imposed by EPA**

Also during 2010, the Bureau of Forestry became deeply engaged in the development of the State's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) required by EPA to meet the TMDL for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The Bureau of Forestry has actively participated in the Urban/Suburban/Rural Workgroup of Pennsylvania's WIP and has worked hard to ensure that urban tree planting is recognized as an effective means to reducing urban stormwater runoff. The Chesapeake Bay Forester researched methods presently available to quantify nutrient uptake resulting from tree planting, and provided a recommended process for use in the State model. Our involvement has brought to the forefront of discussions with the Department of Environmental Protection the importance of urban tree canopy in stormwater management. It may also have spurred the urban forestry research community to establish standardized methods of converting a percent increase in tree canopy to a specific number of trees to be planted.

### **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009**

Through the ARRA, Pennsylvania received \$4.5 million to support three major tree planting projects to establish 15,500 new trees. With a \$300,000 grant to the Pennsylvania Community Forestry Council, 1,000 street and park trees were planted in the Scranton-Wilkes Barre metropolitan area. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society was awarded \$1.8 million for 970 street trees, some of which will be planted in sophisticated stormwater management tree pits, and for 7,000 riparian buffer seedlings. The Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest received \$1.2 million to retrofit five parking lots, adding 364 trees to them. The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy received \$2.4 million to plant 6,250 new street trees, some illustrating state-of-the-art urban planting practices using curb cuts, tree box filters, structural soil, and Silvacells.

### **Urban Tree Canopy and Stormwater Management**

The Pennsylvania Urban Forestry Program is working to connect trees and forests to water quality and watershed health. A high-quality slide presentation has been developed by the Extension Urban Forester in northeast Pennsylvania explaining the role trees and forests play in taking up pollutants before they reach waterways and reducing stormwater runoff. In 2010 numerous full-day workshops have been provided to municipal staff, elected officials, and urban foresters. Presentations by the urban forester are combined with the expertise of university researchers studying the effects of green infrastructure to provide compelling educational programs.

### **Specific to Northwest Pennsylvania**

Grants available through the Pennsylvania Community Forestry Council have continued to fund street tree inventories and management plans for communities throughout the State. The Extension Urban Forester assigned to the northwestern part of the State has been very active in assisting communities with these efforts, using i-Tree software where possible.