

Urban and Community Forestry Program

2010 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 Hammer, 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.

The completion of the West Virginia Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy was a significant and beneficial undertaking this year. Several priorities identified in the assessment were targeted with grants and technical assistance. These involved developing a Chesapeake Bay Community Grant program and expanding Project CommuniTree within the Potomac tributaries. Our GIS Specialist and Chesapeake Bay Forester were major contributors to our outreach this year. Results from the Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy as well as the Chesapeake Bay Community Grants are described in the Accomplishments section of this report.

West Virginia Urban and Community Forestry Program Components

Grants and Resource Assistance

- Chesapeake Bay Community Grants
- Cool Community Grants
- Project CommuniTree
- 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: 2010 West Virginia Forest Resource Assessment & Strategy

Location: Statewide

Objectives: Mitigate Climate Impacts, Protect & Improve Water & Air Quality, Reduce the Impacts of Land Use Change, and Building Program Capacity

Our GIS-based assessment of major issues impacting urban forestry and quality of life issues in communities across West Virginia has been completed. The urban forestry issues identified are building program capacity at the community level, climate change mitigation and energy conservation, population dynamics and resource allocation, air quality, public drinking water quality and quantity, and recreation. Priority area maps and a strategy matrix for each issue have been developed to focus our technical and financial assistance over the next 5 years.

Title: Chesapeake Bay Community Grants

Location: Potomac River Tributary Counties

Objectives: Protect & Improve Water & Air Quality, Tree Planting, and Improve Community Health & Well Being

This initiative was made possible by additional U.S. Forest Service funding to West Virginia's FY10 Chesapeake Bay budget in the amount of \$22,612. Matching grants were offered to communities and watershed organizations to fund canopy cover and watershed enhancement projects within the Potomac Basin. These grants have [four] main goals that were identified in the urban forestry portion of our assessment:

1. Utilize Urban Forestry Management Practices to Protect and Enhance the Health of the Potomac Tributary Watershed
2. Increase Canopy Cover within the Watershed through the Strategic Planting of Trees to Optimize Public Benefits
 - A. Encourage and fund communities to conduct canopy cover and impervious surface assessments and set targets for canopy cover and impervious surface percentages
 - B. Encourage and fund communities to identify potential planting areas consisting of greater than 15 percent impervious surface coverage
 - C. Provide funding to support strategic tree planting projects
3. Linking Watershed Health with Community Well-being
 - A. Promote municipal projects that enhance permeable surface area, stormwater retention, and ground water recharge such as river parkways, rail trail enhancement, stormwater retention ponds, and rain gardens
 - B. Support Project CommuniTree efforts to increase tree planting within the Potomac Tributary Watershed
4. Strengthen Existing and Create New Municipal Tree Care Programs

The Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Board submitted a comprehensive application in partnership with the Cacapon Institute to implement projects within the cities of Bolivar, Charles Town, Harpers Ferry, Ranson, and Shepherdstown. This initiative is being guided by urban forestry staff and our Chesapeake Bay Forester. With local matching funds, it will result in a project that exceeds \$45,224 and is focused on developing urban tree canopy goals and management strategies for these communities. Grant dollars will also allow for the planting of approximately 100 large maturing and 50 small maturing trees at key locations within the county. We anticipate continued success with obtaining Federal funds to implement projects within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Title: CommuniTree Partnerships

Location: Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Objectives: Tree Planting, Climate Change Buffering, Protect and Improve Water & Air Quality, and Capacity Building

Over the past several years, our program has developed a strong working relationship with the West Virginia Conservation Agency. In 2008 the two agencies teamed up to develop a new community tree planting program called West Virginia Project CommuniTree. The program is aimed at promoting tree planting and environmental education through volunteerism on a regional scale. Program goals focus on increasing tree canopy in urban and riparian areas to address many overlapping agency issues such as soil erosion, stormwater runoff, and environmental health. Technical assistance, funding, and grant opportunities from both agencies are combined to meet individual project goals.

Since its inception the program has assisted every West Virginia county located within the Chesapeake Bay watershed and has overseen the formation of two State program chapters. The two agencies continue to work hard to combine expertise and resources in such a way as to benefit private landowners along with county, State, and municipal entities. By bringing organizations and individuals together on a regional level, the program is able to impact a greater number of residents and help build partnerships between interest groups over a wider geographical scale. West Virginia Project CommuniTree offers tree boards, park systems, watershed groups, and volunteer organizations the opportunity to discover and utilize resources beyond their normal jurisdictional boundaries.

Carla Hardy, Watershed Program Specialist with the West Virginia Conservation Agency, was awarded the International Society of Arboriculture Gold Leaf award this year for her dedication to West Virginia Project CommuniTree and urban tree planting within the Chesapeake Bay. Program success seems assured as more new community groups express interest in participating in and hosting planting projects each year.

The need for increased canopy coverage in the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a shared realization for both the Division of Forestry (DOF) and the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA). Our partnership is addressing this issue and producing significant results to benefit water quality in this critical watershed. Over the past year the program had significant impacts in several local communities and watersheds. Spring Run, located in Grant County, was the site of an early spring riparian planting hosted by a local Ruritan Chapter. Volunteers planted over 100 trees to re-establish a critical buffer area along the run. A month later the local Girl Scouts celebrated Arbor Day by sponsoring a tree planting event in Hampshire County. Over 100 scouts attended the planting and educational event, which focused on stream health, watershed issues, and tree planting.

The DOF-WVCA partnership is a great example of how agencies can combine focus areas and resources in a way that effectively addresses the complex issues facing urban forest environments. Project CommuniTree has provided West Virginia communities with the opportunity to address such issues and sponsor tree planting projects to benefit the Chesapeake Bay.



Riparian buffer established through the West Virginia Project CommuniTree at Spring Run.



2010 Arbor Day at Fairmont State University Pre-School.



Girl Scouts celebrate Arbor Day 2010 at Central Hampshire Park in Augusta, WV. The event was sponsored by the Potomac Valley Chapter of West Virginia Project CommuniTree.



2010 Arbor Day and Tree City USA ceremony in Williamstown.



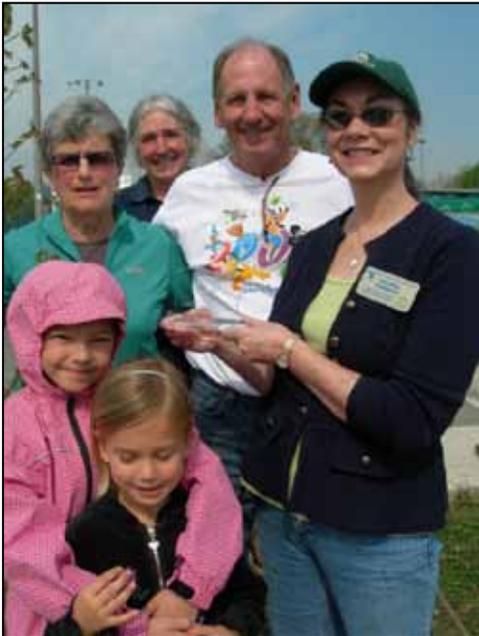
Herb Peddicord, Chesapeake Bay Forester (right) assists volunteers with tree planting at Spring Run in Grant County.



Students at Romney Elementary assist city maintenance staff with tree planting during the city's 2010 Arbor Day Celebration.

Statistical Highlights

Managing Communities:	6
Developing Communities:	44
Participating Communities:	71
Technical Assists:	189
Population Impacted:	413,798
Volunteer Hours Generated:	3,013
Tree City USA Communities:	15
Tree City Growth Awards:	4
Trees Planted:	3,308
Training Hours Provided:	1,279



Petersburg Tree Board members celebrate their fifth year as a Tree City USA.



Carla Hardy, Watershed Program Specialist with the West Virginia Conservation Agency, assists volunteers with a riparian buffer planting during a Project CommuniTree event.



2010 West Virginia Arbor Day Poster Contest Winner Steven Hoover and 5th Grade Class from Kingwood Elementary.