

Urban and Community Forestry Program

2011 Accomplishment Report – Iowa

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Introduction

The Iowa Urban and Community Forestry (IUCF) program provides technical, educational, and financial assistance to communities, individuals, and organizations. Program activities result in improved awareness of urban forestry and the benefits of managing a sustainable and healthy natural resource.

IUCF combines Federal, State, investor-owned utility, and other funds to provide support and technical assistance to more than 500 Iowa communities annually. Matching grants are offered to communities throughout the State to increase tree canopy and improve urban forest resources. Partnerships with cities, counties, and nonprofit organizations enhance and broaden the impact that the IUCF program has had throughout Iowa. During FY2011 Iowa was able to utilize 3 full-time employees providing 3 full-time equivalents (FTEs) and part-time commitments from 15 district foresters amounting to 5 FTEs for a total investment of 8 FTEs.

Key Accomplishments

Operation ReLeaf

In the fall of 2001, a partnership was formed between Alliant Energy and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forestry Bureau to promote energy efficiency, urban forest tree diversity, and increased tree planting on private lands. *Operation ReLeaf* is a residential tree distribution program supported by Alliant Energy (\$250,000 annually) that funds an Urban Forestry Specialist with the Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau and provides partial funding to buy locally purchased landscape trees and sell them at greatly reduced prices to Alliant Energy customers for planting in their yards. Iowa DNR Forestry purchases these landscape trees through a Request for Proposal process, establishes local partnerships with county and city organizations, and coordinates tree distribution days with volunteers. During FY2011, 8 tree distribution projects were organized during the spring and fall seasons, and a total of 1,861 landscape trees were sold to 1,094 Alliant Energy customers at a cost of \$25/tree. Customers also received planting and care advice as well as free wood chip mulch. The value of these trees is approximately \$120,965, with over 250 hours of volunteer service donated to complete the projects.

Plant Some Shade

In the spring of 2004, a partnership was formed between MidAmerican Energy and the Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau to promote energy efficiency, urban forest tree diversity, and increased tree planting in private yards. *Plant Some Shade* is a residential tree distribution program supported by MidAmerican

Energy (\$125,000 annually) that funds an Urban Forestry Specialist with the Iowa DNR. During FY2011, 12 projects were held in cooperation with local, county, and city partners to distribute a total of 3,356 landscape trees to 1,525 MidAmerican Energy customers to plant in their yards. The approximate value of the trees is \$218,140, and over 290 hours of volunteer service were donated to complete the projects.

Trees for Kids and Trees for Teens

The *Trees for Kids/Teens* program was established in 1990 to assist Iowa schools in celebrating Earth Day and Arbor Day. In the fall of 2009, the program evolved into a formal grant program that offers trees for planting on school grounds or public areas. In addition, *Trees for Kids/Teens* produces natural resource-based educational materials for teachers and educators. Funds for the *Trees for Kids/Teens* program are provided by both public and private organizations. During FY2011, a total of 50 grants were awarded and resulted in the planting of 1,830 landscape trees. The total grant amount for the 50 projects was \$137,670, and leveraged an additional \$49,384 in voluntary matching funds.



First grade students in Denver, IA, take part in a *Tree for Kids* planting event.



Third grade students in Denver, IA, take part in a *Tree for Kids* planting event.

Community Inventories

A goal of the Iowa Urban and Community Forestry program is to provide technical assistance through tree inventories and management plans. Inventory data is critical to developing updated community management plans to use in addressing challenges to urban forest health. Information from tree inventory data will be useful in articulating to decisionmakers the functional value of the urban forest and its contribution to the overall health and value of Iowa's environment. A new protocol for conducting urban tree inventories was recently established, and all inventories now include 100 percent of street trees (trees within the community's right-of-way), GPS location for each tree, and information that is compatible with the *i-Tree* program analysis tools. A total of 8 community inventories were completed, excluding inventories fulfilled through Redesign or ARRA dollars.

Tornado Recovery and Community Sharing

In May of 2008, Parkersburg, IA, was hit by an EF5 tornado that killed eight people, injured dozens, and caused several millions of dollars worth of destruction to the community and tree resource. Over the past 3 years, the Iowa Urban and Community Forestry program has had the privilege of assisting Parkersburg with recovery, developing a tree board, using grant programs to plant trees on both public and private property, and making a complete street and park inventory for future tree management.

This year the Parkersburg tree board hit a remarkable milestone in recovery. They were able to give back to other communities facing similar tree damage from storm disasters. In September of 2011, Benton

County was declared a State disaster area after a severe windstorm with 130 mph winds that were sustained for several minutes uprooted and destroyed trees in numerous communities and farmsteads. Workshops on storm recovery were given in Dysart, IA, and Vinton, IA, for both community leaders and homeowners. Valerie Thorn, co-chair of the Parkersburg tree board, shared both Parkersburg's successes and struggles with storm recovery at the workshop. She encouraged the communities to establish tree boards and conduct tree inventories for management planning, and shared information about financial assistance programs for tree planting opportunities. Additionally, the Parkersburg tree board was able to donate funding for tree planting to these two communities as well as Mapleton, IA, which was hit by an EF3 tornado this past April.



A storm damage workshop was held in Vinton, IA.
(Photo by Dean Close, *Vinton Today*)

Statistical Highlights

Managing and Developing Communities:
Population of Participating Communities:
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):

272
1,907,220
19,357

