

Urban and Community Forestry Program 2011 Accomplishment Report – Illinois

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Introduction

Illinois' statewide Urban and Community Forestry program is a part of a \$4.7 billion green industry in Illinois with Tree City USA communities spending \$93 million in 2011 alone on managing their urban forests. The purpose of Illinois' Urban and Community Forestry program is to assist communities and other units of local government in the development or expansion of local urban and community forestry programs. This program serves to increase the awareness of the important role of the urban forest in providing 87.8 percent of Illinois citizens with the amenity values of shade, protection from winter winds or summer heat, protection from air and noise pollution, and reduction of stormwater infiltration rates. Sound tree care and urban forest management practices are encouraged so that Illinois citizens can live in a healthy urban forest that provides a physically, socially, and psychologically safer community environment.

Tree City USA is a core element of the State's Urban and Community Forestry program and is administered through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) in cooperation with the Arbor Day Foundation. This program element alone serves about 7.5 million, or nearly 60 percent, of Illinois' urban and community residents. It provides technical assistance, education opportunities, and networking information in partnership with the Illinois Arborist Association and, in 2011, Moraine Valley Community College.

Five partners provided the volunteer/technical outreach this year, including Openlands, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, Morton Arboretum, Illinois Arborist Association, and Chicago Wilderness. Additionally, technical advice and information were provided through the IDNR Urban and Community Forestry Web site, the IDNR Clearinghouse, the Springfield Urban Forestry Administrator's office, TREE CITY USA NEWSBITS electronic newsletter, and IDNR field offices.

Key Accomplishments

Tree City USA Program

In 2011, 192 municipalities participated in Illinois' Tree City USA program, making Illinois second in the Nation for the number of Tree City USA communities. A total of 31 municipalities also received the GROWTH award, which was also the second highest in the Nation. Illinois has the most Tree Campus USAs (12). Two Tree City/Tree Campus/Tree Line USA conferences were held. The Springfield event was the first official "INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS" event where the State of Illinois

“International Year of Forests” proclamation signed by Governor Quinn was read by Director Miller. This proclamation acknowledged the economic, environmental, and social impact trees have on our world, our Nation, and our State as well as within our communities and private lands.



Attendees of a Tree City USA gathering pose for a picture.

Sustainable Landscape Resources for Community Associations (SLRCA)

Homeowner associations (HOAs) across the Chicago region are responsible for huge areas of “community property.” These areas are often managed by a contractor, hired by the property manager, with little consideration of the big picture related to managing natural resources. The Morton Arboretum organized SLRCA, a collaborative group of HOA representatives, property managers, and natural area/landscape professionals to provide educational resources for HOAs. SLRCA continues to draft a resource manual, and this year SLRCA held three property site walks where HOA members were invited to learn about how trees, ponds, and turf can be maintained more sustainably. The model was successful and will be continued.

Innovative Arbor Day Activities

In addition to assisting with traditional Arbor Day/Earth Day celebrations, the Morton Arboretum installed tree-value tags on 500 trees in Chicago’s loop. They also polled Chicago region municipalities to learn their Arbor Day/Earth Day plans and then shared that information on a Web site to inform the public about how they could join a nearby celebration.



Kids take part in an Arbor Day event with the Morton Arboretum.

Green Infrastructure in Regional Comprehensive Plans

In a landmark development for the conservation community, two major regional comprehensive plans were adopted that used Chicago Wilderness' Green Infrastructure Vision as the foundation for creating livable communities: the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's GO TO 2040 Plan for northeastern Illinois (adopted in October 2010) and the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission's Regional Comprehensive Plan (adopted in June 2011).

Sustainable Watershed Action Team (SWAT)

The Chicago Wilderness Sustainable Watershed Action Team helped communities strengthen their planning infrastructure for sustainable development and natural resources protection. During the 2011 fiscal year, the SWAT provided technical assistance to Bannockburn, Campton Hills, Crystal Lake, Lincolnshire, Mettawa, and Woodstock as well as McHenry County in an effort to protect some of the best remnant natural areas in the region. The county and communities have been progressive in their efforts to protect natural resources.

Leave No Child Inside

Chicago Wilderness and over 70 partner organizations engaged 15,000 families and children in the 2011 Leave No Child Inside programs in June. Activities were designed to connect children to nature and foster a long-term sense of stewardship. This year new offerings for Spanish-speaking families and children with special needs were provided.

HOPP – Historic Oak Propagation Project

The Morton Arboretum worked with Openlands West Suburban TreeKeepers and volunteers from Oak Park, IL, to collect acorns from notable neighborhood oaks in the fall of 2009. These were propagated and potted, and an oak adoption program (HOPP) was developed to track each tree's planting location for future monitoring. Trees were tagged with species, parent tree information, and personalized memory statements. A total of 390 oaks have been propagated and are being grown for use by various organizations.

Citizen Engagement

Openlands worked with the Edgewater Beautiful organization to conduct a tree inventory and prune all of the trees on four major commercial streets in Chicago's Edgewater/Andersonville neighborhood. They also handed out flyers to all of the business owners instructing them on how to care for their street trees.

Illinois Urban Forestry Grants for Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

The Morton Arboretum and Metropolitan Mayors Caucus coordinated an EAB grant program. Fifty-eight communities in the quarantine zone received a total of \$1,000,000 in grants. In this first year of the program, communities have planted 2,916 trees, removed 4,499 ash trees, and conducted 106 outreach measures to raise awareness of EAB. Two-hundred nineteen people representing 199 municipalities, park districts, and volunteer organizations attended grant information meetings where they learned about the grant program, application, emerald ash borer management planning, and tree planting and maintenance basics. The Village of Roselle was the first community to complete its grant-funded inventory and



Openlands worked with Edgewater Beautiful to inventory and prune trees on four commercial streets in Chicago.

management plan. Roselle will serve as an excellent case study because they are modeling a community response to EAB with discount removal, treatment, and replanting service, thereby enabling residents and businesses to manage EAB on private property.

Statistical Highlights

Managing and Developing Communities:	218
Population of Participating Communities:	8,086,524
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours)	17,700

