

Urban and Community Forestry Program

2011 Accomplishment Report – Massachusetts

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Introduction

With dense populations and vast town forests, along with a tremendous resource of town commons and conservation land, the people of Massachusetts have come to expect the steady comfort and beauty of trees in their neighborhoods. Through technical assistance, education, and grant funding, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) provides assistance to communities in their efforts to build support for community forest resources. Urban Forestry Challenge Grants support local efforts to develop sustained urban and community forestry programs in Massachusetts towns and cities. The Challenge Grants program is an amalgam of prior popular grant offerings such as Planning and Education grants; Heritage Tree Care grants, which provide funds for professional care of large and historically significant trees in public landscapes; and Mass ReLeaf grants that support tree planting projects throughout the Commonwealth. In FY2011, the DCR continued to offer Urban Forestry Environmental Justice Challenge Grants as a special category of the larger grant program to focus resources on those communities and populations in the State that are most in need.

Key Accomplishments

Focus on Forest Action Plan Priority Areas

In FY2011, the DCR Urban and Community Forestry Program focused its efforts on the priority areas identified within the Forest Action Plan (FAP) documents as a subset of realistic goals for the foreseeable future. The FAP will function as our guidance document for annual work plan development. Implementation of the FAP means a greater emphasis on delivering support to the priority areas indicated in the plan with a consequent decrease in outreach to communities outside of priority areas. In FY2011, the DCR began extensive outreach in partnership with the Urban Ecology Institute (UEI) to the cities of Fall River, Fitchburg, Brockton, and Haverhill. These four cities were identified as high priority urban areas in the FAP, so the UEI and DCR developed a redesign grant specifically focusing efforts on these communities. The grant was funded by the USDA, and work with these communities has begun. To date, significant initial progress has been made in Fall River and Fitchburg and efforts are commencing in Haverhill and Brockton. In FY2011, priority outreach continued to the cities of Pittsfield, Lawrence, Chelsea, North Adams, and Boston.

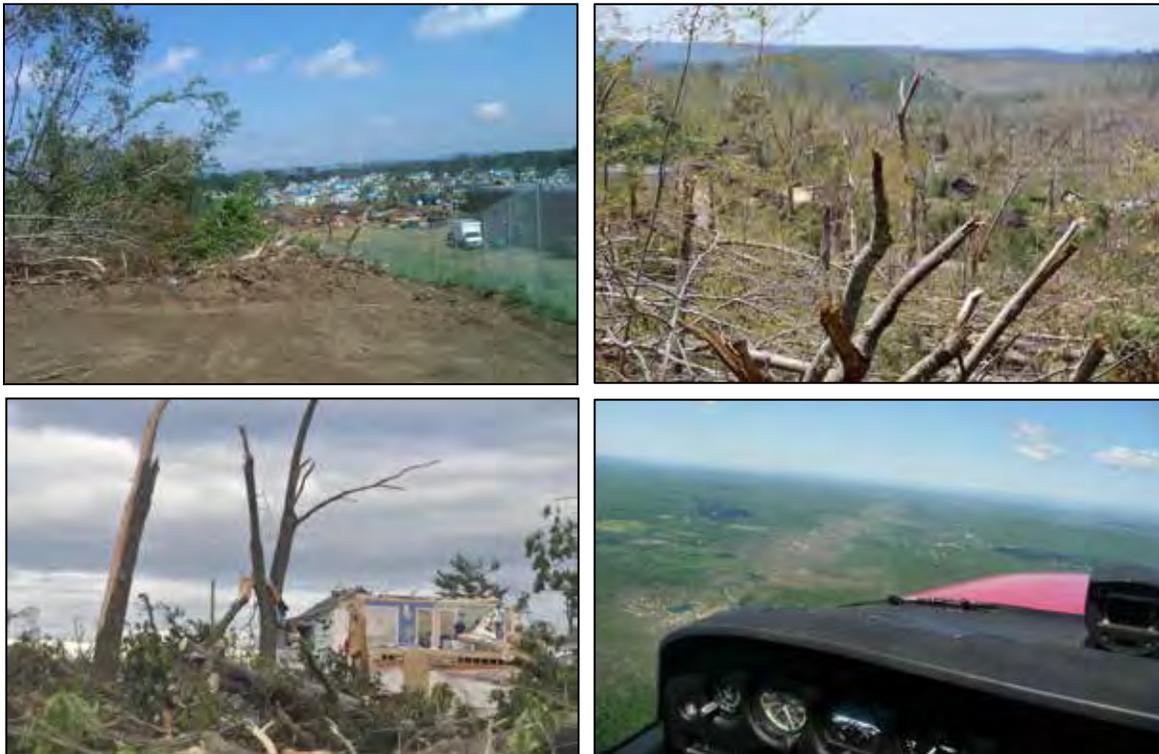
Highest Priority: Asian Longhorned Beetle Response

In FY2011, the highest priority for the DCR U&CF Program remained the response to the Asian longhorned beetle infestation in Worcester County. DCR program staff continued to work with the USDA to implement a reforestation program funded with monies from the American Recovery and Reinvestment

Act (ARRA) Program. Throughout FY2011, DCR U&CF staff continued to provide programmatic oversight and administrative support to the 10 Foresters, 1 Program Coordinator, and 45 seasonal planting laborers who will plant at least 15,000 trees throughout the ALB quarantine zone by May 2012. DCR U&CF staff also expended significant effort to provide technical assistance and educational outreach on the topic of ALB and other invasives to communities and forestry groups throughout the State.

June Tornado

On June 1, 2011, a severe tornado struck west-central Massachusetts, causing heavy damage to 10 communities along a 39-mile-long path of destruction. In addition to the built environment, the forests in these communities sustained massive damage. DCR personnel responded by providing immediate emergency cleanup assistance and helping with damage assessment analysis. DCR U&CF staff worked with U.S. Forest Service staff to disseminate damage assessment imagery to responding agencies and initiated efforts to identify funding that can be used to provide reforestation assistance to the affected communities.



A June 1, 2011, tornado severely damaged 10 communities in a 39-mile-long swath.

From the very first days after the tornado, community leaders and residents expressed immediate interest in replanting their urban forests. DCR U&CF staff worked closely with the U.S. Forest Service and the Massachusetts Tree Wardens and Foresters Association to call together and deploy the Urban Forest Strike Team to the city of Springfield and the Town of Monson, two of the hardest hit communities. USDA assistance with this effort has been outstanding and has earned the Forest Service much deserved praise in the affected communities. The strike team reassessed the trees left standing after the tornado in Springfield for possible remaining hazards and identified more than 2,000 tree planting opportunities within the damaged areas of the city. The strike team also spent 2 days in Monson and developed a list of possible public planting opportunities for the town. Based upon this information and working with Springfield, Monson, and the other communities in the tornado area, the DCR began distributing funds to assist with reforestation efforts. The DCR also developed a grant that was submitted to the U.S. Forest Service to access supplemental funds that will permit DCR reforestation staff currently working on ARRA funds in the Worcester ALB office to provide direct, on-the-ground support for replanting projects during community events in the affected communities. The first of these events was conducted on

October 15, 2011, in Monson. Grant funds have been distributed to the city of Springfield and the Town of Sturbridge, and outreach is underway to the other affected communities. The response to the tornado will remain a high priority in FY2012.

Communication and Collaboration

In FY2011, the 351 Tree Wardens and more than 3,000 friends of Urban Forestry throughout the State were kept abreast of issues, new research, and events through our monthly Citizen Forester newsletter. This past year, the Citizen Forester highlighted topics such as urban soil science and management, the role of urban trees in combating air pollution, stormwater management and urban tree cover, and emphasizing the importance of qualified personnel in municipal forestry departments. The publishing and distribution of the newsletter was not as consistent as has been common practice in past years due, again, to the heavy commitment of program staff to the ALB situation, the tornado, and increased direct outreach to priority communities.

To the extent possible given time constraints, the DCR worked closely with the Forest Service and other Federal agencies on innovative forestry/urban forestry initiatives such as Urban Connections, the Urban Ecology Collaborative, the Northeast Urban Research Station NEURON event, and Boston's Urban Forest Coalition. In addition, the DCR continued to work closely with and support the Urban Natural Resources Institute of the Forest Service Northern Research Station.

Grants

In FY2011, the DCR awarded \$218,804 in 16 grants to communities and groups through the Urban Forestry Challenge Grant Program. These grants provided funding for a broad spectrum of projects including management plan development, inventory work, ordinance development, tree planting, and public education and awareness. In FY2011, the DCR funded the following exemplary Urban Forestry Challenge Grants in addition to 13 other excellent projects:

Applicant: Groundwork Lawrence

Proposal Title: Expanding and Improving Lawrence's Tree Canopy

Request: \$30,000

Proposal Summary: Groundwork Lawrence (GWL) proposes to develop an Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan to guide the work of both GWL and the city of Lawrence for the next 5 years. This project will build upon work done previously by GWL to inventory the public shade trees of the city and to form an urban forest coalition of stakeholders in the care and management of the city's forest resources. Most of this prior work was funded in part with DCR grants because the city has been a high-priority community for the DCR urban forestry program for several years.

Applicant: City of Springfield

Proposal Title: Springfield's Renewal: One Tree at a Time

Request: \$29,200

Proposal Summary: Springfield Arbor Allies, in partnership with the city of Springfield, proposes to plant 168 public shade trees in 12 different low-income neighborhood locations within the city. The plan is to recruit up to 300 volunteers to plant the trees.

Committee Comments: The committee recommends this project for full funding. The committee recommends that the DCR conduct a site visit to review the areas that are to be planted and to discuss the development of a long-term maintenance plan for the new trees. The DCR can also offer training to the volunteers on proper tree planting techniques.

Applicant: Worcester Youth Center for the Worcester Tree Initiative

Proposal Title: Neighborhood Tree Stewards in Worcester

Request: \$20,470

Proposal Summary: The Worcester Tree Initiative proposes to create a new community-based program to recruit and train volunteer tree stewards throughout the community who will help maintain the thousands of trees being planted in public locations in response to the ALB eradication program. The program will complement the Young Adult Foresters program that the DCR funded with ARRA monies and other outreach efforts of the Worcester Tree Initiative. Tree stewards will work directly with the city of Worcester Forestry Division to water, mulch, stake, and monitor public trees.

State Urban and Community Forestry Council

In FY2011, the Advisory Board supported the DCR program by participating in grant reviews and reviewing the annual narrative for Federal funding.

Volunteer Program

The DCR employs a Community Action Forester who works to develop volunteer and partnership efforts, primarily in western Massachusetts. The [Urban and Community Forestry] Program Coordinator and the Community Action Forester work with many communities that are initiating innovative approaches to urban and community forestry. These approaches include comprehensive regional assessments; youth employment programs; citizen training programs; and community planting programs to maximize local resources, harness volunteer energy, and train future stewards. In FY2011, Community Action Forester staff time focused on continued support of the ALB reforestation program and outreach to high-priority communities in western Massachusetts.

Tree boards have assumed new prominence throughout the Commonwealth. Many communities now have officially appointed tree boards, some growing from ad hoc committees created to address a specific tree-related issue. Currently there are 116 citizen tree boards (or equivalent groups) in Massachusetts. Tree boards support the work of Tree Wardens, organize fundraising and educational activities, and in some cases, provide leadership for a municipal tree program. We are continuing to encourage and facilitate the formation of additional groups. In FY2011, the DCR conducted its annual Tree Stewards Training Workshop at the Harvard Forest in Petersham. The training targeted tree committee members, municipal natural resource decisionmakers and staff, municipal Department of Public Works employees, Tree Wardens, and citizen activists. The training was conducted largely under the leadership of the Community Action Forester.

Massachusetts enjoys a high degree of professionalism among several partner organizations operating at the municipal level as the hands-on caretakers of the urban forest. The Massachusetts Arborist Association, in partnership with the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, coordinates a training and certification program for arborists. Some 700 arborists hold the Massachusetts Certified Arborist credential. More are certified, additionally or exclusively, by the International Society of Arboriculture. In FY2011, the DCR continued its support of professional development for municipal arborists and Tree Wardens by awarding a grant to the Massachusetts Tree Wardens and Foresters Association (MTWFA). The association used the funds to defray some of the costs associated with a series of professional development classes and the Association's annual conference. The DCR and the MTWFA continued the process of developing a long-term vision for the MTWFA, including specific steps to increase the level of expertise of its members and Tree Wardens in general. The MTWFA and DCR also continued the process of revising Massachusetts General Law Chapter 87, which establishes the position and authorities of the Tree Warden in every community in the State.

Statistical Highlights

Managing and Developing Communities:	221
Population of Participating Communities:	4,373,180
Number of Volunteer Hours:	In excess of 20,000

