

Urban and Community Forestry Program 2011 Accomplishment Report – Maine

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Introduction

Project Canopy, Maine's Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) program, heightens public awareness of the community forest—what it is and why it is important. The program promotes comprehensive community forest management and builds and supports sustainable local community forestry programs.

In the past year, we [Project Canopy] have worked diligently to diversify our funding base. We have made small gains toward matching our Federal allocation with local dollars through some State grant programs as well as partnerships with local business. This process will continue in the upcoming year as we work toward the goal of developing a full fundraising strategy to privatize specific Project Canopy programs. As part of this strategy, we are working with a private marketing and development firm to refine the Project Canopy marketing message to take to both local businesses and large corporations with an interest in Maine's urban and community forests.

Issues and Opportunities

While efforts in FY 2011 focused on training and technical assistance to municipalities to maintain and enhance budgets supporting local community forestry programming, these efforts have fallen short of the tremendous need. Large municipal tree programs, such as those in the cities of Augusta, Lewiston, and Portland, have had no budget for tree planting for the last several years. The economic downturn has created a gap [between resources and] the need for planting in our State's largest and most urban cities. Gaps such as these typically result in people looking for assistance from the Project Canopy grants program. Diminishing Federal support for the program has widened that gap and contributed to the backlog of planting requests. Many more town and city forestry departments have experienced staff layoffs and shrinking budgets for tree maintenance. This need will only increase as the recession continues and the work is postponed until brighter economic times.

Key Accomplishments

Funding

In 2011, Maine's Project Canopy Assistance Program funded 15 grants to communities and organizations. The primary focus of these three projects was education and outreach. Competitive Project Canopy grants were withheld during FY 2010 due to lack of funding as well as timing of U.S. Forest Service Redesign grant awards. The competitive grants program will resume in FY 2011.

Training

Project Canopy continues to prioritize education and training for volunteers and city staff. An educated citizenry is the most effective tool in creating viable, sustainable local urban and community forestry programs.

In 2011 Project Canopy worked with State and regional partners to deliver training to 654 adult program participants. Maine Forest Service staff members maintain strong partnerships with complementary State agencies such as the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Maine Department of Agriculture. Project Canopy staff worked collaboratively with MDOT to design and implement a new series of workshops aimed at local road officials dealing with tree issues. Six workshops were held throughout Maine with road commissioners, tree wardens, city arborists, and public works crews in attendance.

Community Projects

Town of Yarmouth

Beginning in FY 2009 and continuing through FY 2011, Project Canopy has worked with the Town of Yarmouth on the removal and utilization of the State and New England champion American elm known as "Herbie." Project Canopy staff worked extensively with the community to ensure that all parts of the beloved tree would be utilized for furniture and artisanal items, with the proceeds benefitting the newly formed Yarmouth Tree Trust. The news of the project was highlighted in both local and national media. Two full-length articles were developed and published in "Sawmill and Woodlot Management" magazine. Final sales of "Herbie" wood products took place at the "Herbie – A Tree For All" auction on November 13, 2010. To date, sales have generated over \$50,000 for the Tree Trust.

Corporate Sponsor – Androscoggin Bank

Project Canopy was the featured charity at a combined Cumberland/Androscoggin Chamber of Commerce "Business After Hours" event in Gray on September 30. Project Canopy provided seedling spruce and cedar trees for attendees to take home, in addition to talking about the grants program supporting tree planting in the places we live. Over 100 business representatives learned about Project Canopy and the Maine Forest Service, which was very well received. Additionally, event sponsor Androscoggin Bank unveiled its new initiative to convert bank customers to using paperless e-statements. For each customer that converts to using e-statements, the bank will make a donation to Project Canopy in support of tree planting projects within Cumberland and Androscoggin Counties. As an initial deposit, the bank presented Project Canopy with a \$500 check, as



A guitar crafted from Herbie Wood sold for several thousand dollars.

well as proceeds from the events 50/50 raffle, for a total of \$580. As a part of Project Canopy's effort to diversify our funding base from strictly Federal money, the event was a very successful beginning to looking at corporate and business funding in support of community programs to plant trees.



This screenshot from the Androscoggin Bank Web site invites customers to switch to e-statements, which in turn supports Project Canopy.

Statistical Highlights

Number of Managing Communities:	31
Number of Developing Communities:	101
Number of People Living in Communities provided with Educational, Technical, and/or Financial Assistance:	934,130
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	6,448
Tree City USA Communities:	18
Tree City USA Growth Awards:	2

