

Urban and Community Forestry Program 2011 Accomplishment Report – Vermont

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Introduction

The Vermont Urban and Community Forestry (VTUCF) Program's mission is to promote the stewardship of urban and rural forest landscapes to enhance the quality of life in Vermont communities. This mission recognizes the need to address environmental, economic, and social values of forests from the urban core, to suburban developments, to rural forest land. The program assists in developing sustainable local programs by providing technical assistance, information, and education. The program team consists of a State coordinator, a Community Outreach Coordinator, and five District Urban and Community Foresters. The Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Council, which is composed of 20 members representing professional associations, educational institutions, nonprofit groups, regional officials, tree boards, and State agencies, works in partnership with the VTUCF Program to identify the State's urban and community forestry needs and to determine program direction.

The stories shared in this 2011 Accomplishment Report highlight the VTUCF Program's strength in partnerships.

Key Accomplishments

A Green Stormwater Infrastructure Initiative Begins

The State of Vermont has recognized the need for a new approach to stormwater management through green infrastructure. Vermont's Forest Action Plan specifically identifies green infrastructure as a priority issue to be addressed. To lead the effort to move Vermont towards a more sustainable future with green infrastructure, Vermont's Urban and Community Forestry Program teamed up with the Stormwater and Ecosystem Restoration Programs to develop a *Green Stormwater Infrastructure Initiative*. The Urban and Community Forestry Program's foundation served as a model for the initiative's formation. It was recognized early on that to be successful, it needed an advisory board and a strategic action plan.

In 2010, a Green Infrastructure Roundtable was formed consisting of experts in stormwater management from both the public and private sector to standardize the use of green stormwater infrastructure practices throughout Vermont and to establish a framework for action by developing a programmatic strategic plan. Work commenced quickly and steadily, and a strategic action plan was completed in 2011. The plan's overarching goal is *to restore and maintain the pre-development hydrology of the State's developed areas through the use of green infrastructure practices*. To achieve this goal, four key audiences are targeted: stormwater design professionals (i.e. design engineers, landscape architects), municipal governments, existing property owners, and State agencies. For each target audience, the plan identifies the current challenges to widespread adoption of green stormwater infrastructure practices and describes a set of

objectives and tactics to address those challenges. The partnership that formed to bring this initiative to realization has raised the awareness of the value of urban and community forests and has increased the Program's reach. To achieve the vision and goals outlined in the initiative's plan, urban forestry must be employed and promoted as an essential practice in green stormwater infrastructure.

Partnership Showcases that Trees are Key to Revitalization

People across Vermont are organizing downtown revitalization efforts to attract new business, create more jobs, generate new investments, and preserve or enhance the vitality of their downtowns. Vermont's Downtown Program, in partnership with the nonprofit organization Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV), assists with these efforts and promotes that reinvesting in the community is essential, including investing in the urban tree canopy. Working with both the Downtown Program and PTV, and with a generous private donor, a Community Forestry Grant program was established to help reinvest in the canopy downtown. The Urban and Community Forestry Program provides the technical assistance to support this effort including grant application development, project review, and onsite inspection. The grant program started in 2009 and has since provided over \$120,000 in grant funds, leveraged more than \$150,000 in local match, and planted 350 trees in the heart of 24 communities. The partnership showcases that an investment in urban tree canopy really does mean business.

Community, Students, and Science Connect in Burlington

The University of Vermont (UVM) Burlington campus sits in the middle of the State's largest urban forest. It is home to the Rubenstein School that offers hands-on environmental programs that integrate natural sciences and social perspectives as well as home to the Vermont Monitoring Cooperative (VMC), which provides information needed to understand, manage, and protect Vermont's forests. With the help of the Rubenstein School's first-year students in NR1: Natural History and Field Ecology, the VMC will now add the urban forest to its list of permanent forest monitoring plots. Two hundred monitoring plots have been established using the Forest Service iTree-Eco assessment tool. The plots will be surveyed on a routine basis by the students. The long-term database will assist the city of Burlington in its own management decisions and the State in assessing overall forest health trends while allowing the students to develop the personal knowledge and skills in the field of urban forestry. This is a unique collaboration that connects community, students, and science in assessing long-term trends in Burlington's urban forest.

Statistical Highlights

Managing Communities:	19
Developing Communities:	47
Population of Participating Communities:	571,339
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	13,436

