

Urban and Community Forestry Program 2011 Accomplishment Report – Wisconsin

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Introduction

The mission of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Urban Forestry Program is to encourage, enable, and enhance sound management of Wisconsin's urban forest ecosystems. The WDNR provides urban forestry technical, financial, and promotional assistance to local and tribal governments along with nonprofit organizations through its Urban Forestry Working Group. Led by a State coordinator, a grant manager, six regional coordinators, and six half-time specialists (the grant manager position is currently vacant), statewide policy development and implementation are managed with a team approach in partnership with the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council.

Key Accomplishments

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

There have been multiple EAB finds in Wisconsin since the first find on July 29, 2008. At this time, quarantines are in effect for 12 counties in 3 WDNR Regions. The Urban Forestry Working Group continues to focus efforts on EAB-related issues. Examples of these efforts follow.

Mechanized Urban Tree Removal Demonstration

With financial assistance from a U.S. Forest Service Wood Education and Resource Center grant, the WDNR partnered with the city of Oak Creek, the U.S. Forest Service Forest Products Lab, and other public and private entities to demonstrate the use of mechanized logging and processing equipment in an urban setting. In 5 days, 516 trees in Oak Creek, WI, were cut, removed, and processed. The cost of the demonstration was approximately \$26,000. Combining the three resulting wood products—saw logs, pulpwood, and biomass—it cost \$900 to process and utilize/dispose of 470 trees. The demonstration proved that using mechanized logging equipment can be economical for urban tree removal. The results could reduce tree removal and disposal costs for communities; generate marketable pulpwood, biomass, and sawlogs; and provide loggers with a new urban market for their services during downtimes in traditional forest harvesting.



Mechanized urban tree removal was successfully piloted in Oak Creek, WI.

Outreach Efforts to Wisconsin Communities

The Wisconsin Urban Forestry Working Group provides outreach and assistance to Wisconsin communities in planning for and addressing the impacts of EAB. A majority of outreach efforts have been directed to municipal arborists, but to reach those individuals who are generally responsible for planning and budgets, an effort was initiated to reach municipal administrators, park and recreation administrators, and decisionmakers.

In August 2010, the EAB Urban Ash Management Panel (which includes members from the WDNR; Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection [DATCP]; University of Wisconsin; municipal government; and the arboriculture and nursery industries) published *Reducing the Impact of Emerald Ash Borer: Guidelines for Managing Ash in Wisconsin's Urban Forests*. The guidelines provide Wisconsin communities and professionals with guidance and recommendations on how to manage their urban forests in the face of EAB. They are available on the Wisconsin EAB portal (<http://datcpservices.wisconsin.gov/eab/article.jsp?topicid=22>).

With financial support from DATCP, Urban Forestry staff members were able to mount an outreach “blitz” to introduce the urban ash management guidelines to municipal administrators. DNR staff presented the guidelines at the League of Wisconsin Municipalities Annual Conference on October 14, 2010. The audience, made up of more than 35 public works staff, engineers, and city administrators, learned ways to mitigate the impact of EAB as well as how DNR urban forestry assistance can help them use trees to accomplish other goals such as managing stormwater, conserving energy, and increasing the tax base. This was followed up with a full-page advertisement and article in the League’s monthly magazine (*The Municipality*) and a listing of the multiagency Wisconsin EAB program in the League’s annual products and service guide.

Wisconsin park and recreation administrators were targeted for outreach through an urban forestry exhibit at the Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association’s Annual Conference and Trade Show in November 2010. This effort was followed up with placement of an advertisement in the Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association membership directory and buyers guide. An article regarding the urban ash management guidelines appeared in the quarterly magazine of the association and was accompanied by an informational advertisement.

Urban Forestry Advocacy: Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council

The Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council is an advisory committee to the WDNR consisting of 24 representatives from the green industry, government agencies, municipalities, and nonprofit and trade organizations. The Council continues to actively reach out to legislators and municipal administrators regarding the value and need for growth and management of urban tree canopy. Wisconsin welcomed 29 new Assembly members and 8 new Senate members to the State legislature, which provided numerous opportunities for new conversations. The Council is already reviewing and planning ahead for the impact redistricting will have on additional networking in 2012.

The Council has been an active participant in the Division of Forestry’s Forest Assessment and Statewide Forest Strategy process. The Council provided comment



Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council members participate in a process to develop a plan of work for the next 3 to 5 years.

regarding the Strategic Direction (the Division's response that describes what DNR will do to implement the Statewide Forest Strategy). The Council has reconfirmed its niche and role and is in the process of developing a plan of work for how the Council will support the Statewide Forest Strategy over the next 3 to 5 years. Further information about the Council is available at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/UrbanForests/members.html>.

WDNR Urban Forestry Grant Program

A primary goal of the WDNR Urban Forestry Program is to help communities start or continue developing their own sustainable urban and community forest management program. This is achieved through a grant program that awards between \$1,000 and \$25,000 in matching grants. New changes to the 2011 grant program included an additional \$150,000 in funding from the U.S. Forest Service to help communities prepare for EAB and a component for increasing species diversity. Grants will only pay for the planting of trees from genera that represent 10 percent or less of a community's tree population.

The Urban Forestry Grant Program awarded \$633,740 to 54 communities in 2011. The program is helping 45 communities conduct a tree inventory, develop an EAB plan, and/or increase species diversity. Thirteen awards of up to \$5,000 are aiding the development of new urban forestry programs in the State. More information about the WDNR Urban Forestry Grant Program is available at <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/UF/grants/>.

One unique example of how these grants assist with EAB readiness is the grant awarded to the nonprofit Goodman Community Center to aid the Sustainable Atwood (SA) EAB inventory, education, and outreach project. SA is a grassroots organization of over 200 neighbors in the Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Yahara neighborhood of 6,000 residents in Madison, WI. Through this grant-funded project, SA has begun managing its public and private trees to reduce the impact of EAB, using the threat of EAB as a springboard for education, outreach, and training. Three local schools have incorporated EAB into their curriculum. The city, neighborhood, schools, and SA collaborated in a multiple tree planting and EAB education effort to celebrate Arbor Day. An inventory of public and private trees is being conducted, requiring the collaboration of residents, business owners, university professors, interns, and volunteers. SA will use the data to create a preparation and response strategy for replacement and continued stewardship of the urban forest.



A WDNR Urban Forestry grant is funding the inventory of public and private trees in a Madison neighborhood.

Urban Forestry Networking Efforts

Urban Forestry Working Group networking efforts continue to strengthen due to the numerous municipal networking group meetings and conversations that took place throughout the State. There are five regional networking groups with a total of over 200 members, which include municipal tree managers and representatives from utility companies, universities, private consulting firms, and nonprofit organizations. While each group is coordinated differently, most meet about two to four times annually. These meetings offer an excellent venue for municipal forest managers to connect with their peers and learn first-hand the latest technical information and issues by sharing ideas, concerns, and experiences.

Increasing Canopy through Partnerships

Innovative partnership projects are cultivating and building private support for community efforts to increase tree planting and canopy cover. These projects started in 2010 through efforts of Forestry staff and Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council members.

First Downs for Trees

In a project called “First Downs for Trees,” the Green Bay Packers have joined with Brown County, area municipalities, the Oneida Nation, Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) Corporation, and the WDNR to plant one tree in Brown County for each first down made by the Packers during their 2010-2011 regular season. This project is an effort by the Packers organization to reduce the team’s carbon footprint created by traveling. The Packers had 312 first downs in the 2010-2011 season and thus, in April 2011, they purchased 319 trees while Meacham’s Nursery donated another 132 trees for a total of 451 trees being planted in communities all over Brown County. At an event at Red Smith Park in Green Bay, Mark Murphy, Packer President and CEO, planted trees with students from the local school. The Packers have committed to another year of First Downs for Trees and already have 109 first downs!



The Green Bay Packers President planted trees with Green Bay students as part of the “First Down for Trees” initiative.

City of Sparta Tree Planting for Climate Change

The city of Sparta conducted a community-wide planting of 600 trees in May 2011, the first phase of a 3-year project to increase/restore tree canopy. This first-year funding came from a \$24,000 WDNR Urban Forestry grant matched by a \$24,000 Polar Bears International (PBI) grant, part of a pilot project between the WDNR and PBI to raise awareness and plant trees to counteract climate change. With over 50 percent of its public trees comprised of ash and more than 500 already preemptively removed, Sparta faces catastrophic canopy loss to EAB, known to be just 20 miles away.

Oshkosh Taking Root Campaign

The second phase of the Oshkosh Taking Root Campaign, an initiative to beautify the community with more trees, wider terraces, and unified streetscapes, was completed in 2011. The campaign partnered the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, the city of Oshkosh, and the WDNR to raise \$500,000 to plant trees throughout the city. Over 1,000 trees were planted in 2010. Oshkosh received an urban forestry grant in 2011 to develop a strategic and operational plan for the second phase of planting. This plan resulted in the planting of an additional 1,400 trees for a total planting of over 2,400 trees. Planting will continue next year.

Playbook for Successful Tree Planting Initiatives

To further spread and also recognize these successful efforts to engage private support to increase community tree canopy, Urban Forestry staff members conducted a workshop at the Annual Urban Forestry Conference entitled, *Playbook for Successful Tree Planting Initiatives*. Fifty-three municipal foresters learned team building strategies from coaches of six different tree planting initiatives. Participants had a chance to explore tree planting project opportunities and barriers during breakout sessions and left with a playbook of strategies to kickoff their own tree planting project.

Urban Forestry Staff Member Honored with Award of Merit

Wisconsin State Urban Forestry Coordinator Richard Rideout received the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) 2010 Award of Merit, the highest honor bestowed by ISA. Rideout was honored at the organization's July 25, 2010, annual conference in Chicago. The award recognized Rideout for his "leadership, organizational skills, and dedication," which, according to the ISA presentation, "have had a lasting impact on arboriculture and urban forestry throughout the State of Wisconsin, the Midwest, and nationally."



WDNR Urban Forestry Coordinator Don Kissinger leads a tree planting discussion at the Annual WAA/DNR Urban Forestry Conference.

Statistical Highlights

Managing and Developing Communities:	229
Population of Participating Communities:	3,443,420
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	5,994

