

Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council

2013 REPORT



PRESENTED TO THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

First Downs for Trees

“As the team racks up first downs, we’ll be adding to the positive environmental impact trees have, while beautifying our neighborhoods, providing energy savings and producing cleaner air.”

*—Green Bay Packers
President/CEO Mark Murphy*



Lambeau Field Green Bay, WI

So far 1293 Packer Trees have been planted in Brown County communities. At least one tree is planted for each first down earned by the team during the regular season.

On behalf of the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council, I proudly present the Urban Forestry Council’s 2013 report to the Department of Natural Resources. This report includes challenges and opportunities faced by the urban forest, recommendations to improve our forest and how we, as a council, have been raising our voices in support of healthier urban forests. Supporting these recommendations and ideas will help to maintain and improve the valuable services the urban forest provides to the citizens of Wisconsin.

*—Kelli Tuttle, Chair
Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council*

Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council

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Ms. Olivia Witthun
Urban Forestry Coordinator,
DNR East Central Region

Ms. Laura Wyatt
Urban Forestry Council Liaison,
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The purpose of the council is to advise the Wisconsin State Forester and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on the best ways to preserve, protect and improve Wisconsin’s urban and community forest resources, as authorized by Wisconsin statute 15.04 (1)(c).

Cover photo from 2010
National Agricultural Imagery
Program (NAIP)

Executive Summary

Urban forests are significant contributors to the quality of life in Wisconsin. If managed properly, the State's urban forests are a partial solution to our most pressing environmental and economic issues. The environmental benefits derived from millions of urban trees include: reduction in energy consumption, increased property value, reduction in storm water discharge into our lakes and rivers and reduced air pollution. The development and management of our urban forests creates economic opportunities in commercial arboriculture, utility and municipal forestry, affiliated green industries such as nursery tree production, landscape design and installation and emerging industries centered around urban wood utilization.

Much has been accomplished since the 2009 advisory report:

- ✦ The Council was an active participant in the Wisconsin Forest Sustainability Framework, the Statewide Forest Assessment and Strategy development process and provided comment and support for determining WDNR's role in implementing the Statewide Forest Strategy, also known as the Forestry Division's Strategic Direction. In support of the Forest Strategy, the Council has committed to the following actions over the next 3–5 years:
 - ✦ Expand advisory role to encompass issues of canopy and evaluation
 - ✦ Promote species diversity for a more resilient urban forest resource
 - ✦ Encourage utilization of trees as green infrastructure and in low-impact design especially in mitigating storm water issues
- ✦ Partnership projects have been initiated including: assistance with the second Community Tree Management Institute (CTMI) in 2012, growing and strengthening relationship with the League of Wisconsin Municipalities and numerous tree planting initiatives.
- ✦ The new DNR strategic direction shifts the urban forestry program focus from managing trees on public land to a "community canopy" model that includes trees growing on private property.



Immediate Needs

- ✦ **Fill the vacant full-time Grant Coordinator and allocated Partnership Coordinator positions.** Managing our urban forests at the canopy level to achieve our stated goals will require the creation and coordination of partnerships at all levels.
- ✦ **Increase the urban forest grant appropriation to accommodate an increase in program scope and audience.** Changes to the Strategic Direction will require additional funding to what is already a traditionally under-funded and over-subscribed program.
- ✦ **Commission a task force to develop an urban wood utilization network.** Emerald ash borer (EAB) has begun creating a glut of wood from removal of ash trees. An excellent opportunity exists for private sector development of high-value wood products from urban wood. Forming a task force comprised of state agency representatives, local officials, business leaders and small business owners will jump start this opportunity.
- ✦ **A special appropriation from the forestry mil tax fund to invest \$1 million in EAB mitigation and urban forest restoration.** Wisconsin communities are facing a \$3 billion expense from the removal and replacement of ash infested with EAB. This initiative will stimulate small businesses while taking action to maintain the environmental benefits provided by urban forests.
- ✦ **Act upon a continuous forest inventory and canopy analysis.** The information from the forest inventory assessment is essential to large scale planning and setting resource goals and priorities, identifying new threats and recognizing new economic opportunities.
- ✦ **Include urban forestry in applicable state legislation.** Initiating and/or supporting creative legislation to advance urban forestry development and management will benefit all residents by increasing supporting the green job economy and environmental benefits.

Canopy View

By shifting the DNR urban forestry emphasis from managing at the street tree level to managing urban forests at the community canopy level, DNR will be able to provide more assistance to more communities. The community canopy model is better aligned with the goal of maximizing public benefits because it features the entire urban forest, both publicly and privately held, managed for the full suite of associated benefits.



Mt. Horeb, WI



Ash mortality resulting from EAB in Ozaukee County.

Emerald Ash Borer

Wisconsin forests contain more than 770 million ash trees. In urban areas it's estimated that one out of every five trees is an ash. Removal and replacement of urban ash is estimated at more than \$3 billion.

Challenges & Opportunities

The Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council's focus on the critical issues of managing urban forests, planting more trees, increasing species diversity and facilitating partnerships supports the Division of Forestry's strategic direction. A shift in emphasis from a public "street tree" model to an integrated "community canopy" model better reflects how public benefits from all trees in communities can be maximized. Despite a sluggish economy, the Urban Forestry Council believes there are unique and historic opportunities to advance urban forestry efforts at the local, state and national levels and to restore Wisconsin's reputation as a national leader in urban forestry.

Challenge:

Emerald Ash Borer & Invasives.

Emerald ash borer threatens 5.2 million urban ash trees in Wisconsin; 20% of the urban forest and as much as 50% of the public trees in some communities. Loss of urban ash trees is estimated to cost \$3 billion for tree removal and replacement. The loss of environmental benefits resulting from decreased tree canopy is estimated at \$270 million per year. Other invasive species threaten our urban forest including oak wilt, thousand cankers disease (walnut), gypsy moth and many more. Two immediate challenges due to EAB include disposal of large quantities of wood waste and tree replanting.

Opportunities:

Urban Wood Utilization Network & Species Diversity.

The removal of millions of urban ash trees will result in a crushing amount of urban wood that will undoubtedly strain the financial and physical capacity of local governments. The state is uniquely positioned to bring together private companies and government agencies to coordinate the development of a state-wide urban wood utilization network. This network would facilitate the disposal of EAB infested wood and serve as a catalyst for economic development and the growth of new wood product markets.

Emerald ash borer and similar invasive species present communities, urban forest professionals, advocates and volunteers a chance to improve the overall health of the urban forest thru increased tree species diversification. A forest comprised of 50% maple and 50% ash is not healthy. However, a forest comprised of 5% of 20 different species is much healthier and loss from invasive species will be reduced. This opportunity would stimulate green industry small businesses including tree nurseries and related tree professionals including landscape architects, contractors, urban foresters and landscape maintenance and tree care firms.

Challenge:

Operating at the canopy level. The DNR strategic direction shifts the urban forestry program focus to a "community canopy" model. This task shifts the focus from the approximately 15% forest managed by municipalities to include the additional 85% privately controlled tree population. This represents a fundamental shift in scale and policy. The focus of scale is moving from local to regional, state and multi-state scale.

Opportunity:

Creating a greater impact. Operating at the canopy level will create a greater overall impact to our state. More than ever before the State will need to grow networks and partnerships at the regional, state and multi-state scale. Operating at this larger canopy scale will result in greater environmental benefits for all citizens and greater economic benefits for private sector small businesses.

Challenge:

Inadequate funding for communities and stakeholders. Communities are struggling to maintain their urban forestry resources. This indicates a need for increased sustainable funding for municipalities and related stakeholders. The popular urban forestry grant program is traditionally oversubscribed and indicates an unmet need that will only increase with emerald ash borer and other invasive species.

Opportunity:

Partnerships and increased funding. Interest in trees and green infrastructure has never been higher. Partnerships with businesses, environmental-sustainability groups, non-profits, service groups and related professionals can be utilized to increase tree canopy cover and improve urban forest management.

Increased funding will benefit all citizens of Wisconsin. Sustainable models for funding and creative legislation to provide incentives for municipalities and stakeholders needs to be developed. Increased grant funding for the urban forestry program will continue to help leverage local and private investment and support development of models for sustainability.

Raising Our Voices

Advocating for Urban Forests—Progress since 2010

Recognizing the difficult challenges and abundant opportunities facing Wisconsin's urban and community forests and our new focus on expanding canopy, the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council has prioritized its efforts to engage partners, stakeholders, and policy makers in critical conversations addressing issues facing Wisconsin urban forests.

Strategic Planning

The Council was an active participant in the Wisconsin Forest Sustainability Framework, the Statewide Forest Assessment and Strategy development process and provided comment and support for determining WDNR's role in implementing the Statewide Forest Strategy, also known as the Forestry Division's Strategic Direction.

In support of the Forest Strategy, the Council has committed to the following actions over the next 3–5 years:

- Expand advisory role to encompass issues of canopy and evaluation
- Promote species diversity for a more resilient urban forest resource
- Encourage utilization of trees as green infrastructure and in low-impact design especially in mitigating storm water issues

Grants

DNR Urban Forestry grants support communities in starting and developing their own sustainable community forest program. For years 2010–2012, **176 grants totaling \$ 1,725,636 were awarded** to municipalities, non-profits or tribes. The matching grants range from \$1,000 to \$25,000.

Established in 2007 by Wisconsin Act 13 the **catastrophic storm grant program** allows rapid deployment of grant funds in a Governor-declared emergency. Funds were utilized for the second time when **two northwestern municipalities received \$61,147** to remove and replace trees damaged during July 2011 catastrophic wind storms.

The grant program remains over-subscribed and under-funded. In 2013, less than half (46%) of grant proposals were funded.

Invasives

Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council continues to support Forestry Division efforts with invasive species and NR 40. Council member **John Gall** represented the urban forestry community on the **DNR Species Assessment Group** and provided input on the DNR's EAB Strategic Plan as a representative of the Wisconsin Arborist Association. The council continues to advocate for community EAB readiness planning and urban wood utilization.

Quantifying the Urban Forest

Data collection for the second statewide urban forest inventory was completed in September 2012, repeating an inventory first piloted in

2002. The information gathered will be used to project the composition, condition and value of trees and the services they provide. The inventory is funded through a grant from the Forest Service and is the first time urban forest inventory plots have been re-measured anywhere in the nation. Data will be analyzed by Forest Service and DNR staff and reported back in 2013.

Benefits Beyond Beauty

At the invitation of **Assembly Representative Fred Clark**, the Council investigated the inclusion of urban forestry into AB 649—Climate Change legislation 2010. Two potential amendments were identified with one forwarded by Representative Clark to the bill sponsor and one tabled until bill passage and inclusion in the rule making process. Action on the bill did not occur before the end of session and the bill died.

Manage the Trees We Have

DNR Urban Forestry's completed the second **Community Tree Management Institute (CTMI)** in 2012. The 6-day program provided staff from 18 communities with the technical and managerial skills to effectively manage their urban forests. Council members participated in the program by leading an activity to identify statewide urban forestry policy issues and sharing opportunities for advocacy.

Increasing Canopy through Partnerships

Council member **Jordan Skiff (Fond du Lac)** continues to strengthen a growing relationship between DNR urban forestry staff and the **League of Wisconsin Municipalities** to inform elected officials of the threat of emerald ash borer.

Council members are supporting numerous tree planting initiatives throughout the state including: **Shirley Brabender Mattox (Oshkosh)**—Oshkosh Area Community Foundation's *Taking Root Fund* has raised more than \$500,000 in private funds for community tree planting and beautification; **Mark Freberg (Green Bay)**—Green Bay Packers *First Downs for Trees* supporting tree planting in Brown County communities; **Jordan Skiff (Fond du Lac)**—Polar Bears International's *Tree Planting for Climate Change*; **Mayor Don Merkes (Menasha)**—SCA Tissue tree planting partnership. **Jeff Wolters—Root, Root, Root for the Brewers** tree planting program.

Council member **Mayor Don Merkes** presented his recommendations for successful community tree planting initiatives during the Urban Forestry Annual Conference.



Northeast Wisconsin i-Tree Analysis Pilot

WDNR embarked upon a pilot project to use i-Tree Canopy and i-Tree Streets (public domain software) to quantify the extent and benefits of the urban forest in 19 communities in northeast Wisconsin. Led by urban forestry specialist Kimberly Miller and regional urban forestry coordinator Tracy Salisbury, the project will help urban forest managers, elected officials and community organizations increase support for tree planting and management initiatives and provide baseline data for future trend studies.

Community Tree Management Institute (CTMI)

Forty-seven Wisconsin communities now have a trained urban forestry manager on their staff as a result of Wisconsin CTMI. The popular program is designed for municipal parks, public works, planning or other staff responsible for public tree management, but with minimal formal training.



Dr. Les Werner (UWSP) discusses tree root system anatomy.

Recommendations: What is needed for Sustainability?

In 2007, the council identified four strategic issues focusing on the most critical issues facing the urban forestry community. These continue to be our priority strategies for the future even as we move from a street tree view to an all inclusive, canopy level.



- 🌿 **Manage the trees we have**—Maintaining the health and safety of existing trees will increase their benefits and services to communities. Building sustainable programs to manage forest health and longevity is critical to maximizing these benefits through time.
- 🌿 **Plant more trees**—Wisconsin's urban tree canopy cover is only 14%. Wisconsin could triple the services provided by its urban trees if communities reached a 40% canopy goal.
- 🌿 **Increase biodiversity**—Ash and maple make up over 43% of Wisconsin's urban forest. This has set communities up for catastrophic loss to exotic diseases and insects. Planting a diverse population is essential to a sustainable resource.
- 🌿 **Facilitate partnerships and collaboration**—DNR Forestry is uniquely positioned to act as a convener and facilitator for urban forestry at the state level. Investment in the DNR Urban Forestry program is increasingly important to create and support the collaboration of partnerships, networks and consortiums leading to increased leverage of public and private resources needed to support a sustainable urban forest, at the canopy level, for the benefit of all Wisconsin's residents.

What Needs to be Done

DNR Forestry is uniquely positioned to act as a convener and facilitator for urban forestry efforts.

Urban tree canopy mitigates environmental concerns associated with developed landscapes, provide a multitude of socio-economic benefits and are a source of green industry jobs and value-added wood products. These are undeniable facts. Emerald ash borer is and will continue to be a threat to all forests in the State of Wisconsin. This also is an undeniable fact. Fundamentally, there are two options available to urban foresters trying to cope with EAB or any other epidemic; pro-actively manage the resource to mitigate costs to maintain value and benefits or let the epidemic spread and clean up the aftermath. The sciences of urban forestry management and economics both indicate that pro-active management is the only viable option.

The burden of pro-active management is not, however, the responsibility of one party (e.g. a community or the State). To be effective, all parties must recognize the critical importance of their respective contributions and actively pursue a course of action that will facilitate achieving the desired outcome. **The State of Wisconsin has been, is, and must continue to be an active partner in protecting, managing, and developing our community forests.**

Advisory Recommendations:

The Council understands that these are times of change and uncertainty, but with this comes opportunity! Recognizing the investment in planning and the development of a new statewide Forest Strategy, we feel it is critical for the Division's urban forestry program to move forward with implementation. The Council makes the following recommendations to the DNR as it addresses the critical challenges and opportunities facing Wisconsin's urban forests:

Fill the vacant full-time Grant Coordinator and allocated Partnership Coordinator positions. The Council recommends acting immediately upon these allocated positions to accommodate the change in management focus outlined in the new Strategic Direction. Specifically, by moving from a street tree to a canopy level management approach the DNR is increasing its scope to include the 85% of the urban forest located on private property. Consequently, the DNR will need to work effectively and efficiently to foster public-private partnerships. These full-time positions will provide the continuity and consistency necessary to accomplish future canopy based goals and initiatives.

Increase the urban forestry grant appropriation. Shifting to a canopy scale significantly expands the focus of the program and will require an increasing number of partners to meet the needs of the program and communities. This expansion in scale and audience coupled with increasing threats from invasive pests will further tax an already over-subscribed grant program. An increase in urban forestry grant funds, which require a 50-50 match, will **leverage increased investment of local public funds and private funds** and directly **support the green jobs economy.**

Commission a task force composed of state agency representatives, local officials and businesses leaders to develop an urban wood utilization network. Invasive pests such as emerald ash borer have created an awareness of and alarm about the urban wood issue. This creates an opportunity for private sector economic development as higher-value recycling options are established while, at the same time, addressing an expensive waste disposal burden for communities.

Request a special appropriation from the forestry mil tax fund to invest \$1 million dollars in EAB mitigation and an urban forest restoration initiative. Wisconsin communities are facing a \$3 billion bill for removal and replacement of urban tree canopy resulting from emerald ash borer. What is even more devastating is the loss of environmental services once provided by these trees. An urban tree restoration initiative will stimulate the green industry composed of primarily small businesses while taking strategic action to maintain the environmental services provided by our urban forests.

Act upon a continuous urban forest inventory and canopy analysis. With the expanded focus to a canopy level through the new Strategic Direction, acting upon the allocation of resources in support of the urban forestry assessment is more critical than ever before. The information from the assessment is needed to efficiently move forward at all levels. Information from the continuous assessments is of increasing importance, especially for large scale planning, and in setting resource goals and priorities, identifying new threats, quantifying benefits and identifying economic and business development opportunities.

Include urban forestry in applicable state legislation. Initiate or support creative legislation to advance urban forestry development and management. The economic and environmental benefits derived from urban forests are well established. What's missing is legislative authority that provides incentives, both public and private, to maximize these benefits and truly make our urban forests work for us.

Tree City USA

Wisconsin is home to 184 Tree City USA making Wisconsin the third highest ranking state in the nation. To be recognized as a Tree City USA, a community must meet four requirements. It must have 1) a designated tree board or forestry department, 2) an annual forestry program expenditure of at least \$2 per capita, 3) a tree ordinance, and 4) observe and proclaim Arbor Day.



City of Stevens Point Mayor Andrew Halverson with local Cub Scout Pack.

Economics of 100 large public trees over 40 years

Costs: \$148,000

- ☛ Planting and pruning
- ☛ Removal and disposal
- ☛ Irrigation
- ☛ Sidewalk repair
- ☛ Litter
- ☛ Legal and administration

Benefits: \$379,000

- ☛ Energy savings
- ☛ Improved air quality
- ☛ Water runoff mitigation
- ☛ Real estate values

Net Benefits \$231,000— Return on Investment

Source: US Forest Service, 2005



Harry Libby—Lifetime Achievement



Oconomowoc Junior Woman's Club & Oconomowoc Parks & Forestry—Project Partnership



Dave Scharfenberger—Distinguished Service



Michael Dillon, Town of Menasha Supervisor—Elected Official Distinguished Service

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This publication can be made available in alternative formats (large print, Braille, audio tape, etc) upon request. Please call (608) 266-8204 for more information.



Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council Awards

The Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council annually presents the Urban Forestry Awards in recognition of outstanding efforts of individuals, organizations and communities that further urban forestry in Wisconsin.

2011 Winners

Lifetime Achievement—Harry Libby
Recognizes sustained leadership while serving as Middleton City Forester for 19 years and guiding the development of a comprehensive and proactive municipal urban forestry program resulting in increased tree canopy.

Distinguished Service—Dr. R. Chris Williamson, UW—Madison Associate Professor and State Entomology Specialist
Recognizes his leadership while serving the urban forestry community through entomology research, education and outreach, with emphasis on invasive insects including emerald ash borer.

Elected Official Distinguished Service—Arthur Bushue, Village of Clinton Trustee
Recognizes his leadership and support in guiding the development of a comprehensive urban forestry program for the Village of Clinton which serves as a model for other Wisconsin communities.

Project Partnership—Oconomowoc Junior Women's Club and the City of Oconomowoc Parks & Forestry Department
Recognizes their sustained partnership of planting trees in Oconomowoc parks on Arbor Day in celebration of the birth of babies born to club members. More than 100 trees have been planted since 1982.

Innovations in Urban Forestry—Green Bay Packers
Recognizes "First Downs for Trees," an innovative approach to offset carbon produced during away game travel by planting trees in Brown County for each first down achieved during the regular season.

2012 Winners

Distinguished Service—David Scharfenberger
Recognizes 20 years of service as volunteer City of Hartford Forester conducting Arbor Day activities and performing many services to ensure a diverse, healthy and aesthetically pleasing urban forest.

Elected Official Distinguished Service—Town of Menasha Supervisor Michael Dillon
Recognizes leadership in promoting the benefits of the urban forest and sustainable urban forest development, while facilitating Arbor Day programs and implementing tree planting projects.

Project Partnership—University of Wisconsin—Extension Agriculture & Natural Resources Programs in Brown, Outagamie, and Winnebago Counties
Recognizes partnerships to provide multi-county arboriculture workshops benefiting Wisconsin's urban and community forests.

Innovations in Urban Forestry—Jonas Zahn and the Northwoods Casket Company
Recognizes the creation of a unique tree planting and reforestation project tied to a business which utilizes wood.

Innovations in Urban Forestry, Bock Community Forest Field Day—City of Middleton
Recognizes the development of a community event which showcases the community forest and demonstrates arboriculture skills, horse logging, and wood utilization in a responsible, environmentally sustainable way.

For additional information on the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Awards Council and how to nominate a project, person or organization for recognition, go to <http://dnr.wi.gov>, key words "urban forest."

The Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council would like to recognize and thank the DNR urban forestry team:

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Ms. Elizabeth Dierickx
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Ms. Kim Sebastian
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Ms. Laura Wyatt
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Mr. Don Kissinger
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Mr. Jeff Roe
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Ms. Olivia Shanahan
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