



Urban Forestry in the Midst of Wildlands

Even in cities and towns surrounded by some of the wildest country you can find, trees and other vegetation make an important difference

In a land of such vast natural beauty, it's easy to forget the importance of having trees in your community.

Have you ever traveled down a main street somewhere and noticed how the trees shading the roads and buildings make that community a place where you would like to work and live? Do you remember trees growing in your own yard that provided you with shade and or added to the beauty of your home? Do you remember planting trees in your yard, sometimes with the help of children? Many communities in Alaska are growing quickly and in places expansion is happening without much effort to keep existing



Local volunteers planting new trees at the Stellar School in Alaska

trees or plant new trees to replace those removed during construction. In a land so filled with natural wonders, it can be easy to overlook the value of trees and other vegetation in your day-to-day surroundings. Trees can reduce noise levels, filter air, and reduce stormwater runoff.

A Blend of Natural, Social and Economic Systems

Urban and Community forestry is the management of forests and related natural resources in popu-

lated areas. This includes an integration of natural, social, and economic systems as they affect and are affected by human activity. The Alaska Urban and Community Forestry program promotes planting "the right tree in the right place". Through this program Alaskans will be able to provide better care to their community trees, learn how to manage their urban or community forests and create more appealing, productive and healthy communities in which to live. The program is delivered by the State Forester's office, with financial and technical assistance from the Alaska Region of the USDA Forest Service, through a nationwide Urban and Community Forestry program.

More than 100 Grants

Since the program started in Alaska, in 1991, the Alaska Urban and Community Forestry Program has awarded 118 grants totalling \$229,800. The recipients, in turn, matched the grants nearly two-to-one with other funding in order to make their local Urban Forestry projects happen. It's important to note that these Urban and Community Forestry grants have not just gone to Alaska's larger cities. Places like Hollis, Coffman Cove, and Kake in Southeast Alaska have also applied for and received the support, along with Fort Yukon, Holy Cross and Fairbanks in interior Alaska, communities through-

out southcentral Alaska, plus Dillingham, Naknek, Cold Bay and even Sand Point on the Aleutian Peninsula.

Volunteers

Local volunteers helped make most of the projects happen. That helps create a sense of Community Pride. Thirty community members have also received specialized training to become Alaska Tree Stewards. Part of that training is a requirement to contribute 30 hours of urban forestry work in your communities. In addition 500 more Alaskans have received urban forestry training.

Certified Arborists

The program has also coordinated and sponsored the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Arborist exam. In 1991, Alaska did not have any certified arborists, now there are over twenty. Property owners can contract with the certified arborists to help with planting and caring for trees on their property. Without certified arborists, there were some contractors that were topping trees that did not need to be topped, planting trees incorrectly so their chance of survival was limited and in general not following nationally recognized ISA standards for tree planting and care.



Celebrating Arbor Day at Denali Elementary School

In the last few years many property owners in southcentral Alaska have had questions about their trees because of infestations of spruce beetles. Using federal financial assistance from the Urban and Community Forestry program, the Alaska Division of Forestry partnered with the Alaska Cooperative Extension to hold a series of workshops for property owners that provided them with information about the spruce beetle and what the property owners could do to try to protect their trees. They have also given workshops on “defensible space” which provides homeowners information on protecting their homes from wildfires.

Publications

Using funds from this program, the Alaska Division of Forestry was also able to produce and distribute several self-help publications such as *Plant a Tree, Alaska's Guide to Tree Selection, Planting, and Care*; *Community Trees and Forests Source Book: An Alaskan directory of resources for planting and caring for trees in your community*; *Pruning Landscape Trees*; *Protect Your Home from Wild-fire-Fire Resistant Vegetation and Landscaping*; *Recommended Tree Planting Specifications for Landscaping Contracts*; *Plant the Right Tree near Utility Lines*, plus several others.

The goal in Alaska is for communities to establish effective, self sustaining community forestry and tree care programs with strong local support.

Partners in this Project

- ♦ Forest Service, Alaska Region, State and Private Forestry
- ♦ Alaska Division of Forestry

To Find Out More

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