United States Department of Agriculture

2013 Urban Connections Annual Report

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Boston, Massachusetts

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

Detroit, Michigan

Forest Service

Eastern Region

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August/2014

Reflecting on Another Amazing Year in 2013

Message from the Eastern Regional Forester

Even before joining the Eastern Region as Regional Forester in April 2013, I had heard about the Forest Service's Urban Connections program.

In the East and Midwest, we are uniquely positioned to reach urban residents, due to the fact that 40% of the nation's population lives within our 20-state region. Therefore, one of my priorities as Regional Forester is sharing information on the importance of natural resources and our nation's forests. The mission and vision of Urban Connections is a key component of this goal.

I know that the success of the Urban Connections program is due in large part to amazing partners in each city, numerous

Overview

Urban Connections saw great success connecting citizens to the land in 2013. This report reflects a shared vision among the Forest Service's many programs, partners, volunteers, and community members. Thanks to excellent collaboration—from planning to sharing information to working on projects—we celebrate an excellent year of building connections between our nation's forests and urban communities in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis/St. Paul.

2013 Program Highlights

- 26 agreements with partners leveraged over $1.5 million to conduct outreach programs connecting urban residents to local green spaces and the nation's forests.
- Ten student interns were hired through Forest Service programs to gain natural resource skills for possible future employment.
- Natural resource information was shared with over one million urban residents through events and programs.
- Engaged over 11,000 urban residents through on-going projects/programs.
- An active on-line presence; including Twitter, led to 90,000 overall impressions per month.

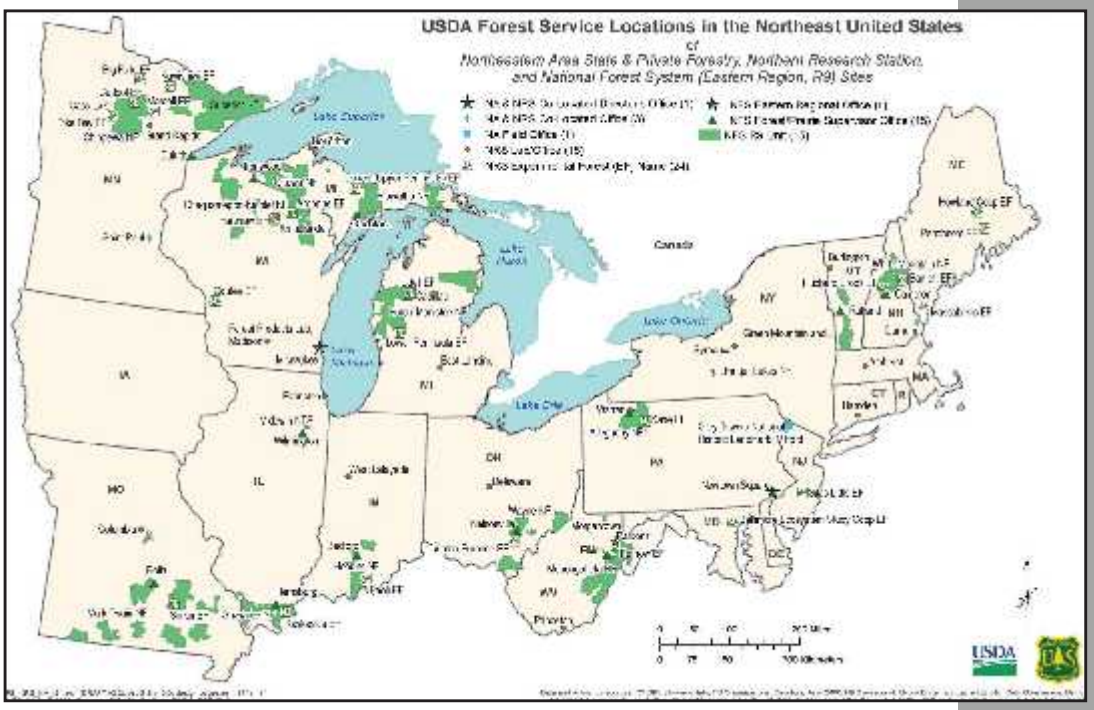
Vision Statement: Urban residents in five of the country's largest metropolitan areas are engaged in caring for and enjoying the nation's forests (local parks, woodlands, and National Forests and Grasslands).

Mission Statement: To grow and foster mutual relationships connecting urban residents and the Forest Service through the use and conservation of forests and green spaces.

The Urban Connections program is guided by four strategic goals:

1. Stewardship of Nation's Forests—promoting sustainable forest management and enhancing the capacity of forests to provide public benefits.
2. Partnerships with Communities—create long-term partnerships with organizations.
3. Urban Resident Information & Involvement—share and widely distribute Forest Service information and messages to urban leaders, media, and other outlets.
4. Forest Service's Organizational Effectiveness—increase understanding of urban needs and Agency diversity.

This annual report is organized around these goals—enjoy & THANK YOU!



volunteers, and concerned citizens. I also acknowledge the hard work of our city coordinators and Forest representatives for bringing diverse groups together to make a difference on the land.

In 2013, I experienced this synergy with one key partner in Milwaukee—The Urban Ecology Center. The enthusiasm and passion of those involved in this urban gem is inspiring and exciting!

I celebrate with each and every one of you the accomplishments of 2013, and look forward to a rewarding and productive 2014.

—Regional Forester Kathleen Atkinson

Woodsy Owl and local painter Sylvia Chavez paint the land mural at the Boston Children's Museum

Boston, Massachusetts

Boston Children's Museum's FOCUS on the Environment and Exploration

Children and families created 3 community murals with local artists as part of the Forests, Oceans, Climate and US (FOCUS) Program at Boston Children's Museum in July to promote conservation of water, sky and land, and exploration of the outdoors. The activities were conducted in collaboration with the Boston Children's Museum, the Wyland Foundation, Seeds of Hope Stewardship for Sustainability, and the Forest Service in New England. The mural exhibit encourages visitors to conserve and explore the natural world.

Coordinator Lisa Perez (left) works with youth to improve local Detroit parks

Detroit, Michigan

Detroit Youth Work to Improve Local Parks

Planting trees, creating nature trails, removing invasive species, and restoration projects are all part of natural resource management. In 2013, 915 students and teachers had the opportunity to do all of the above in two local Detroit parks—the historic Belle Isle and Rouge Park. Participants gained valuable insights into what it takes to maintain a natural space and what a natural resources career would look like. The Forest Service was proud to partner with the Greening of Detroit, and the Developing Urban Forest Stewards program on Belle Isle in this successful endeavor.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Children's Forest & Arboretum Debut in Milwaukee

All ages are invited to explore the 40-acre green space making up the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum and Children's Forest. In exploring the space, located along the Milwaukee River, kids can search for the Children's Forests' "imaginature stations" throughout the Arboretum. Visitors can participate in outdoor classes, help with research, help maintain habitat for wildlife, or just chill out in the tranquility of nature. The Forest Service was proud to join partner The Urban Ecology Center, along with Milwaukee County Parks, and Milwaukee Rotary Club on this amazing endeavor. Anticipated reach of the Arboretum and Children's Forest—10,900 students/1,500 adults—and the possibilities? Endless.

Children's Forest signage welcomes children to the new Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

From Trash to Treasure—St. Paul Neighborhood Park Gets a Makeover

Because of a fantastic collaborative effort among the Forest Service, St. Paul Parks & Recreation, community and agency volunteers, teachers, and students, 18 acres of woodland in St. Paul's Como Regional Park was transformed from a trash and invasive species (buckthorn) infested area to a functioning outdoor classroom. Thanks to site restoration efforts, including creation of 2,500 linear feet of accessible trails, planting of 1,700 trees and shrubs, and planting of 1,500 grasses and fobs, five different ecological "classrooms" were created throughout the park. At least 12 different schools and organizations took advantage of these "classrooms" as a teaching area in 2013. This rewarding transformation was due to the passionate people involved, as well as a grant from the state of Minnesota Environment Natural Resources Trust Fund.

This recently restored fireplace in Como Regional Park was originally dedicated to poet Joyce Kilmer

Youth found a giant caterpillar during Boston's "Explorations in an Urban Wild"

Boston, Massachusetts

More Boston Youth in the Woods

An exciting collaboration among "e" inc., Urban Connections, and the White Mountain National Forest will bring more than 700 Boston youth into the woods by September 2014. This is due in part to a 2013 More Kids in the Woods award highlighting "Explorations in an Urban Wild" program, which brings urban youth from low-income, underserved communities in Metro Boston to the Allendale Woods Urban Wild. Just steps from the city, this un-fragmented woodland provides an amazing landscape to experience nature-based activities guided by a naturalist.

A Historic Ranger greets visitors at The Henry Ford's Greenfield Village and shares some Forest Service history

Detroit, Michigan

Celebrating Ten Years of Sharing History & the Importance of our Natural Resources

For the past 10 years, visitors to the The Henry Ford (approximately 2 million annually) gained first-hand knowledge of not just the history of automobiles, but also the history of the Forest Service, and importance of natural resource management. This was achieved through innovative programs such as Penny Pines (distribution of 20,000 tree seedlings), a historic Forest Service Ranger, and an annual Arbor Day celebration.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Canoeing in the City

Over 500 Milwaukee residents attending Indian Summer Festival on Milwaukee's Lakefront came away with an awesome souvenir—canoeing experience. Training was provided by instructors from Wilderness Inquiry, with assistance from Forest Service staff. Wilderness Inquiry is an official partner with the Forest Service in connecting urban residents to the great outdoors through outdoor recreation. Milwaukee was one stop on the canoemobile's 2013 16-stop Midwest tour.

Milwaukeeans explore Lake Michigan in a canoe

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

Tree Canopy Grows by Leaps & Bounds in St. Paul's Frogtown

Frogtown, a suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota, is known for its cultural diversity, and unfortunately for its low tree canopy cover. In 2013, 75 trees were planted throughout the neighborhood to address this. Urban trees provide multiple benefits, including: reducing energy use by shading buildings in the summer and blocking cold winter winds; absorbing air pollutants; decreasing soil erosion; and increasing property values. This successful endeavor was thanks to a partnership between the Forest Service, Tree Trust, Tree Frogs, and the participation of enthusiastic volunteers and community members.

Frogtown homeowner Renee Taylor stands proudly next to her newly planted tree thanks to the tree planting partnership

College students meet with employers during the SPLASH! Water Careers Conference in Boston

Boston, Massachusetts

Boston Young Adults Explore Careers in Water Management

The SPLASH! Water Careers Conference at Roxbury Community College raised awareness of water management careers while bringing 40 employment organizations and over 250 high school and college students together, thanks to the leadership of Region 1 of the Environmental Protection Agency. Forest Service employees Sheela Johnson, White Mountain National Forest hydrologist, and Jessie Scott, Boston Urban Connections coordinator, conducted water testing exercises and shared insightful information with attendees.

Sign welcoming visitors to the new exhibit at the John G. Shedd Aquarium

Chicago, Illinois

Partnership with Chicago's John G. Shedd Aquarium Bringing Message of Aquatic Invasives "Home"

The Forest Service is a proud partner of the "At Home on the Great Lakes" exhibit at the John G. Shedd Aquarium, which debuted in 2013. The exhibit gives the Aquarium's annual 2 million visitors a unique glimpse at essential native species in the Great Lakes, as well as the invaders (non-native invasive species) threatening their health. And, it doesn't stop there, companion programs have been developed for professional teachers (online) and teens (green gardeners).

Attendees to Detroit's Outdoorama visit the Forest Service booth and learn about Smokey Bear

Detroit, Michigan

Events Engage Detroit Residents in Natural Resources

In 2013, 2.3 million metro Detroit residents learned more about the Forest Service by participating in a plethora of engaging events—such as Outdoorama, Shiver on the River, National Get Outdoors Day, No Child Left Inside, Detroit Metro Youth Day, and the Great Lakes Bat Festival. Takeaways from these programs included 24 bat boxes built by volunteers to be placed in Eastern Region national forests in order to augment habitat.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Milwaukee Conservation Ed Interns

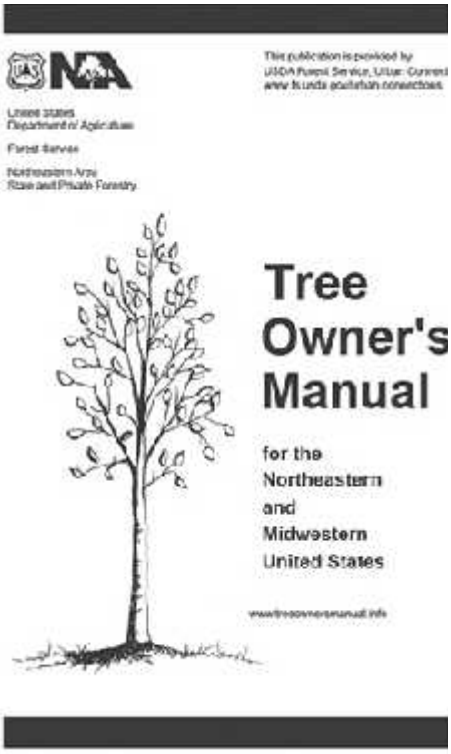
Want a glimpse of what the 2013 Forest Service conservation education interns were up to this summer? Check out their wonderful video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gQXOcc3HVY) featuring highlights of their summer." For the first time ever, the Intern Team included a videographer/photographer, who participated in educational programming, while also capturing their fun adventures connecting over 1,900 Milwaukee youth with the great outdoors.

Conservation education intern Arturo Garcia assists Milwaukee youth with nature activity

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

Tree Care Instructions

The Tree Owner's Manual is a handy reference guide developed by the Forest Service's Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry to give homeowners basic tree planting and care information. Every new tree owner in St. Paul's Frogtown received a manual to help keep their tree healthy and thriving. Tree Trust also gave copies to Minneapolis residents receiving new trees.



Jeff Norcross with EPA Region 1 offers insight during the Pathways Information Workshop at Roxbury Community College

Boston, Massachusetts

Making Pathways to Federal Employment

The Forest Service and the Environmental Protection Agency's Region 1 jointly conducted a "Pathways to Federal Careers" informational workshop at Roxbury Community College with 27 students, providing an overview of the Pathways program and other federal hiring authorities, and the job application process through USAJobs.gov. Working at individual computer workstations, attendees were given the opportunity to create a USAJobs.gov profile and apply for jobs.

Kids get a unique look at Hiawatha National Forest's amazing fish population

Detroit, Michigan

Expedition UP: Detroit Residents Head to the Hiawatha

Individuals from the Detroit area traveled to the Hiawatha National Forest for a fun-filled learning experience. Thanks to a partnership among Our Global Kids, Urban Connections, and other federal and state management agencies, the 45 participants saw forest management and career opportunities firsthand in archeology, aquatics, botany and recreation. Participants have continued to participate through Outdoor Nation programs sharing the outdoor experience with others in Detroit. Several participants in this program have made camping and travel up north part of their annual vacation plans.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Milwaukee Teens get a First-hand Glimpse of Forest Management

Teens from Milwaukee's Neighborhood House joined Milwaukee conservation education summer interns on an adventure to the Chequamegon-Nicolet, just a four hour drive from the Milwaukee metropolitan area. The Forest offers many unique experiences; for example, ten teens and four interns enjoyed canoeing, fishing, hiking, orienteering and making campfires. Interspersed with these activities was learning what it takes to manage a national forest and what it's like to work for a natural resources agency.

Teens from Milwaukee get unique glimpse of forest management on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest Service

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

Minneapolis Youth SEAK & Find Natural Resource Experiences and Information

Urban Connections and the Superior National Forest are proud to partner with Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center on the Students Eagerly Acquiring Knowledge (SEAK) program. The goal of which is to pique urban youth's interest in science, natural resource careers, outdoor recreation and environmental education. After completing an after school environmental inquiry club, participating high school students (from Minneapolis and Duluth) explored the Superior Hiking Trail and canoed the Forest's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Through these experiences, students learned about scientific research, career opportunities and leadership skills. Students connected with staff on the Superior and Chippewa National Forests via videoconference; attended an Outdoor Nation summit; and went on a Wilderness Inquiry led canoe trip.

SEAK students studying macroinvertebrates on a Minneapolis lake

City Teams

The Urban Connections program in each key city is a success because they are TEAM efforts. The teams consist of a Coordinator, representatives from National Forests, the Northern Research Station & Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry.

This team works with a wide range of excellent local partners and organizations in order to reach a broad audience with messages about the importance of the urban environment, ways to get involved, and how your back-yard fits into the larger landscape, including national forests. Because of these passionate and dedicated individuals and groups, we are making a difference in this area. And we are excited to continue to advance this great work.

To get a sense of where the forests are compared to key urban outreach cities, as well as research and state & private locations, check out the detailed map on page 2.

Urban Connections Program Manager
This position is currently vacant due to Daryl Pridgen's retirement in June 2014. We thank Daryl for his passion and commitment to the UC program—he will be missed!

Daryl's legacy can be seen here with his granddaughter as a Junior Ranger

Boston

Team
Tom Wagner, White Mountain Forest Supervisor; **Tiffany Benna,** White Mountain Public Services Team Leader; **Colleen Madrid,** Green Mountain & Finger Lakes Forest Supervisor; **Ethan Ready,** Green Mountain & Finger Lakes Public Affairs Specialist; **Terry Miller,** Field Representative—Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry; **John Parry,** Urban & Community Forestry Program Manager—Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry; **Mark Twery,** Research Forester—Northern Research Station

Partners
Boston Youth Environmental Network; MA Department of Conservation and Recreation; Statewide Black Clergy; Student Conservation Association (SCA); Seeds of Hope Stewardships for Sustainability; US Environmental Protection Agency Region 1

Boston Coordinator
Jessie L. Scott III
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston, Massachusetts 02114
617.626.4979 • jlscott@fs.fed.us

Detroit

Team
Jo Reyer, Hiawatha Forest Supervisor; **Mary Doke,** Huron-Manistee Deputy Forest Supervisor; **Mike Conners,** acting Field Representative—Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry; **Thomas Schmidt,** Northern Research Station; **Kathryn O' Conner,** Eastern Region

Director of Public and Governmental Affairs; **Janel Crooks,** Hiawatha Public Affairs Officer; **Ken Arbogast,** Huron-Manistee Public Affairs Officer; **Jill Johnson,** Field Representative—Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry; **Therese Poland,** Research Entomologist—Northern Research Station; **Daryl Pridgen,** Eastern Region Urban Connections Manager

Partners
Michigan State University Extension; The Henry Ford; Detroit Zoological Society; The Greening of Detroit; Our Global Kids; Michigan Department of Natural Resources; Student Conservation Association—Detroit

Detroit Coordinator
Lisa Perez
1400 Oakman Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48238
313.494.4735 • lperez@fs.fed.us

Milwaukee

Partners—Team membership is currently being finalized
Neighborhood House of Milwaukee; Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful; Urban Ecology Center; Betty Brinn Children's Museum; Lakeshore State Park; Lake Valley Camp; Safe and Sound Mke

Milwaukee Coordinator
Jean Claassen
626 E. Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53129
414.297.1394 • jclaassen@fs.fed.us

Minneapolis/St. Paul

Team
Brenda Halter, Superior Forest Supervisor; **Kris Reichenbach,** Superior Public Affairs Officer; **Darla Lenz,** Chippewa Forest Supervisor; **Mike Theune,** Chippewa Public Affairs Officer; **Barb Tormoehlen,** Field Representative, Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry; **Gina Jorgensen,** Director of Communications, Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry; **Tom Schmidt,** Assistant Director, Northern Research Station; **Deb Dietzman,** Director of Communications, Northern Research Station

Partners
Laurentian and Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Centers; Minnesota Department Natural Resources; Salvation Army; St. Paul Parks & Recreation; Tree Trust; Wilderness Inquiry

Minneapolis/St. Paul Coordinator
Teri Heyer
1992 Folwell Avenue, 3rd floor
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108
651.649.5239 • theyer@fs.fed.us

Get Involved

ONLINE RESOURCES

Twitter handle: @UC_USFS
UC website: http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r9/workingtogether/?cid=stelprdb5207958

The Forests in the Eastern Region Welcome You! Plan a visit today:

Allegheny (Pennsylvania): http://fs.usda.gov/allegheny
Chequamegon-Nicolet (Wisconsin): http://fs.usda.gov/cnnf
Chippewa (Minnesota): http://fs.usda.gov/chippewa
Green Mountain & Finger Lakes (VT/NY): http://fs.usda.gov/gmfl
Hiawatha (Upper Michigan): http://fs.usda.gov/hiawatha
Hoosier (Indiana): http://fs.usda.gov/hoosier
Huron-Manistee (Michigan): http://fs.usda.gov/hmnf
Midewin NTP (Illinois): http://fs.usda.gov/midewin
Monongahela (West Virginia): http://fs.usda.gov/mnf
Ottawa (Upper Michigan): http://fs.usda.gov/ottawa
Shawnee (Illinois): http://fs.usda.gov/shawnee
Superior (Minnesota): http://fs.usda.gov/superior
Wayne (Ohio): http://fs.usda.gov/wayne
White Mountain (New Hampshire): www.fs.usda.gov/whitemountain

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Eagle River