



Urban & Community Forestry in Alaska

Key Messages

Alaska's community, city, village, and neighborhood trees and forests provide important environmental, economic, and social benefits. Residents and visitors alike encounter trees and forests along local streets, trails, and greenbelts; in local parks; on school and university campuses; and in city and town business districts where people shop. The Urban & Community Forestry (UCF) Program is a partnership between the Alaska Division (Division) of Forestry and the USDA Forest Service, State & Private Forestry. In 2009, the UCF Program provided technical, financial, and training assistance to communities across the state with a total of over 463,000 people, more than 73% of the total population of Alaska.

Recent Accomplishments

Research shows that city forests filter storm-water runoff; provide habitat for fish and wildlife; increase residential property values; reduce office worker stress; help speed healing for hospital patients; reduce attention deficit disorders in children; reduce traffic speeds and lower driver stress; improve air quality; and enhance business districts, increasing time and money spent there. Trees provide benefits where we live, work, play, and learn.

In partnership with the Forest Service, the Division retains two urban forestry professionals who work statewide. They provide assistance to local governments, non-profits, Native villages, other federal and state agencies, universities, and members of the green industry. The focus is to help develop local programs to inventory trees, create plans for management and replacement, develop tree care standards and ordinances, and offer information to local tree advocacy groups. The Division provides technical assistance on tree risk and safety; proper tree planting; appropriate species and tree selection; tree maintenance and pruning; selecting healthy trees and nursery stock; tree insects and diseases; using trees as buffers from wind, snow, dust, and noise; tree identification; and planting the right tree in the right place. In 2009, technical assistance and/or grants were provided to Anchorage, Ketchikan, Juneau, Metlakatla, Homer, Wasilla, Sitka, Fairbanks, and Tok. A grant to the American Society of Landscape Architects funded a website on Alaska trees and shrubs. The Division and Forest Service partnership is assisting the municipality of Anchorage with scholarships, a tree inventory and management plan, and a forest canopy cover analysis.

The Division and Forest Service sponsor Tree City USA, Tree Line USA, and Tree Campus USA. Tree City USA promotes abundant, healthy city and community trees. In 2009 awards were given to Juneau, Anchorage, Wasilla, Fort Richardson, Sitka, Eielson AFB, Ketchikan Gateway Borough, and Fort Wainwright. Chugach Electric, Golden Valley Electric, and Matanuska Electric qualify as Tree Line USA utilities, recognizing their expertise in working to keep the power on and local trees growing. The University Alaska Anchorage is the first and only campus in Alaska to be nationally recognized for tree care and expertise, and has earned designation as a Tree Campus USA.

More Information

Barbara Hollenbeck, Urban & Community Forestry Program Manager, USDA Forest Service, Alaska and Pacific Northwest Regions (AK, OR, WA), 503-808-2351, bhollenbeck@fs.fed.us.