

Urban and Community Forestry Program 2017 Accomplishment Report – Illinois

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Introduction

The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program is authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-313) and revised by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of the 1990 Farm Bill (Public Law 101-624) to promote natural resource management in populated areas and improve quality of life. The purpose of the Federal U&CF program is “to provide financial, technical, educational, and related assistance to State foresters to assist communities to plan urban forestry programs and to plant, protect, maintain, and utilize wood from community trees and forests to maximize social, environmental, and economic benefits.”

Core program activities are those that lead to the establishment of self-sustaining local U&CF programs that improve the condition and extent of trees and forests in cities, suburbs, and towns. This law and the U.S. Forest Service mandate the following four standard program elements: 1) State Program Administration, 2) Volunteer Outreach Capacity, 3) Urban/Community Forestry Council, and 4) Statewide Strategic Plan.

To accomplish these mandates, Illinois sustains an administrative position in the Springfield headquarters, works with partners, and supports the work of nonprofit organizations such as the Heartland Conservancy, Illinois Arborist Association, Morton Arboretum, Openlands, and Trees Forever. Leadership and advice are provided to the Forestry Development Council’s Urban and Community Forestry Committee as well as technical input and writing for the Forest Action Plan’s Urban and Community Forestry sections. Active program elements include the following: Tree City USA Recognition and Technical Outreach/Growth Awards, Tree Line USA, and Tree Campus USA program administration; TCU NEWSBITS, which is sent out weekly to monthly depending on information available; development of a disaster recovery program; support for the Illinois Arborist Association educational sessions at their annual conference; and technical assistance to communities.

Key Accomplishments

Illinois Becomes First State in Northeastern Area to Deploy a State Strike Team

On June 19, 2017, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, in partnership with Trees Forever, the U.S. Forest Service, and the city of Ottawa, held the first state-level Urban and Community Forestry

Strike Team deployment in the Northeast or Midwest. Eight highly trained professional arborists with Strike Team Task Specialist Certification deployed to Ottawa’s storm-impacted area. They were there to do a Level I Rapid Tree Risk Assessment. The goal was to make sure that there were no hidden dangers left behind after initial cleanup from a recent tornado. The team members used the International Society of Arboriculture’s Tree Risk Assessment Qualifications protocols and FEMA’s criteria for debris removal. The team assessed public trees with storm-related damage as well as storm-damaged private trees that posed a threat to people or property on public land.



The Illinois Urban Forest Strike team in Ottawa, IL, poses for a picture on its first state-led deployment. (Courtesy photo by Mary Kazmarek)

Successful Partnering Goes Worldwide

For the past two decades, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Forestry Program has supported arborist education by sponsoring sessions at the Illinois Arborist Association Annual Trade Show. The following sessions were sponsored: Municipal, Commercial, Utility, General Sessions, Hispanic Language, and the Tree Climbing Demonstration Tree. Illinois arborists and urban foresters have been updated on industry standards. Attendees were the first to know about new cutting-edge technologies, tree care techniques, and forest health issues. Last year the funding was used to enhance the Tree Climbing Demonstration by adding an electrical hazards component to the tree. The International Society of Arboriculture saw this and liked it so much that they began a campaign to prototype this model internationally. Once again, Illinois has helped lead the way through its innovative educational outreach.



People take part in electrical hazards/tree trimming training using the “Demonstration Tree” at the Illinois Arborist Association Annual Conference and Tradeshow. (Courtesy photo by Illinois Arborist Association)

Statistical Highlights

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| Managing Communities: | 136 |
| Developing Communities: | 125 |
| Population of Participating Communities: | 8,483,775 |
| Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours): | 21,722 |

