

# Urban and Community Forestry Program 2017 Accomplishment Report – Maryland

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## Introduction

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) preserves, protects, enhances, and restores Maryland's natural resources. The Maryland DNR Forest Service is the State agency responsible for the management and protection of the State's urban forestry resources. The group within the Forest Service with direct oversight of these resources is the Urban and Community Forestry Program (U&CF).

The U&CF program protects existing trees and forests through the implementation and enforcement of laws, licensing individuals that perform tree care work, and training of local government employees on tree care. The program reaches out to citizens through tree planting opportunities and the Maryland Urban and Community Forest Committee. It also recognizes counties, towns, and other groups for involvement in the care and planting of trees within their jurisdictions. The U&CF program has four dedicated full-time equivalent employees and numerous other field staff that perform U&CF duties on a part-time/as-needed basis.

## Significant Community Projects

### Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) Initiative

Objective: Increase tree canopy in urban areas.

The UTC Initiative continues to be an overarching program for the Maryland Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry program. The Initiative is a component of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change as Action Plan #16 "Managing Urban Trees & Forests for Greenhouse Gas Benefits" (AFW-2), as well as a goal of the 2014 Chesapeake Watershed Agreement, which states a Tree Canopy Goal & Outcome of expanding urban tree canopy by 2,400 acres by 2025. Maryland is tasked with 45 acres per year (540 acres by 2025). It is also reflected in the Maryland Forest Action Plan: Strategy 2016-2020 Resource Strategy IV.B.1 – Support Livable Green Communities.

To achieve these goals, the Maryland Forest Service U&CF program staff assists local governments, other State agencies, and homeowner associations through technical assistance with tree protection during development and mitigation plantings, urban tree canopy assessments and developing implementation plans, developing and updating forest conservation ordinances, hazard tree evaluations, specimen tree care, and other forestry issues. Some key accomplishments in FY 2017 include the following:

1. The Harford County Arbor Day Planting event was recognized in October 2016 with the 2016 MAC-ISA Gold Leaf Award for its Outstanding Arbor Day event, which has been ongoing for the past 14 years. The Harford County government hosts this yearly event at a different State or county park on Good Friday, the first day of the county school system's spring break. The event has become a family tradition for some participants, who return yearly. Since 2003, nearly 32,000 native trees have been planted during this 1-day celebration.

The Arbor Day event begins with a celebration that recognizes the previous year's tree plantings with the County Executive and other officials presenting the National Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA Awards and the Maryland Urban & Community Forestry Committee's People Loving and Nurturing Trees (PLANT) Awards to Harford County and the local towns. The Arbor Day tree is planted, which officially starts the citizens' tree planting event. More than 200 adults and children gather each year to plant more than 200 native containerized trees and shrubs during the daylong event. In addition to the tree planting, various environmental groups and local nature centers, as well as government agencies such as Aberdeen Proving Ground, set up booths with educational material. Smokey the Bear has been known to make an appearance at the event.

To reward those who attend, each participant receives a free native seedling courtesy of the Forest Conservancy District Board of Harford County. The board is an advocacy group that supports conservation and sustainable use of Maryland's natural resources, especially forest products.



*Families plant trees at the Harford County Arbor Day event.*

2. Through collaboration with the State’s electric utility companies, the Maryland Forest Service has encouraged proper management and conservation of trees on and off overhead electric rights-of-way.

Since its creation by the Maryland Public Service Commission in 1999, the Maryland Electric Reliability Tree Trimming Council (MERTT) has been a forum where public agencies and electric utilities meet to discuss how to comply with regulatory requirements through best management practices. The aim is to accomplish both environmental stewardship and management of vegetation on and off overhead electric rights-of-way, which directly or indirectly affects electric reliability within the State during a storm event. MERTT members include representatives from the Public Service Commission, Maryland Forest Service, Maryland State Highway Administration, and the electric utilities within the State, including Pepco, BGE, SMECO, Potomac Edison, Delmarva Power, and Choptank Cooperative. Meetings have been held quarterly since 1999.

The MERTT Council recently conducted a series of statewide training sessions for Maryland Forest Service field staff, electric utility vegetative staff, and their tree-trimming contractors. The sessions covered topics such as electric utility equipment, utility vegetative management, tree-caused outages, applicable ANSI standards, and proper tree trimming in accordance with Maryland’s Roadside Tree Law and Licensed Tree Expert Law. Two new major changes to utility vegetative management in Maryland were also included: the recently adopted Maryland Public Service Commission’s Vegetative Management Requirements and the Commission’s Rule Making 43. The regulations and rule making specify line clearance distances based on line voltage, customer notification, and the specimen tree designation, which enables specific bigger trees to not be trimmed or removed.

The cross training was determined to be successful as communication between both sides became more effective and the number of complaints and enforcement actions dropped. Approximately 250 staffers attended the statewide training sessions, and electric utility companies have requested that the training be conducted on a regular basis.



*Utility vegetative crews and Maryland Forest Service staff attend a training event.*

### **Statistical Highlights**

Managing Communities:	184
Developing Communities:	334
Population of Participating Communities:	4,750,167
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	60,000

