

Urban and Community Forestry Program 2017 Accomplishment Report – Ohio

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Introduction

Ohio's Urban Forestry Program, created in 1979, is a state-supported service of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) that is focused on providing leadership and technical urban forestry assistance primarily to local municipalities and allied agencies. The Urban Forestry Program mission is to provide community officials and allied agencies with the organizational and technical assistance to effectively manage trees and the land on which they grow. Ohio's statewide network of regional urban foresters helps develop and support sustainable urban forest management programs and empower communities to manage their urban forest resources to meet their local needs.

Key Accomplishments

Tree Commission Academy's 1,000th Student



ODNR continues to provide formal training for Ohio Tree Commissions and municipal staff through the national award-winning Tree Commission Academy (TCA). TCA marked a new milestone in 2017 through the enrollment of the 1,000th student since the academy's inception in 2009. The program also embarked on a new partnership in 2017 with the Ohio Independent Arborist Association to assist with program registration. TCA is a unique educational platform designed to give tree commissioners the urban forestry knowledge and skills necessary to be effective commission members. The program's objective is to produce confident and knowledgeable graduates capable of helping their community effectively meet its urban forestry mission. A diverse curriculum includes useful tools developed by ODNR urban foresters specifically for Ohio communities, including Urban Site Index (USI) and Master Planting Design. Through this curriculum, TCA has been instrumental in developing the structure of municipal tree programs so they are resilient through elected official changes and budget crunches. At its core, TCA embodies the "teach people to fish" philosophy by empowering communities to build sustainable urban forestry programs from within. Since the academy's inception, more than 1,000 citizens in more than 260 different communities have registered for the program, impacting over 4.6 million Ohioans.



Tree Commission Academy Senior Graduation class in Canton, OH, May 2017.

Urban Forest Strike Team Mock Disaster Exercise

In October 2016, ODNR continued its support and development of the Urban Forest Strike Team (UFST) initiative through hosting and assisting the U.S. Forest Service in a Mock Disaster Exercise in Toledo. The UFST initiative helps communities by assessing urban tree damage following natural disasters. Urban Forest Strike Teams are made up of self-contained, professionally trained Certified Arborists or urban foresters from State forestry agencies, other State and municipal agencies, consulting and commercial arboricultural firms, the U.S. Forest Service, and other Federal agencies. UFST members are specifically trained to assess the risks posed by storm-damaged trees using International Society of Arboriculture Tree Risk Assessment standards. These teams are deployed to document trees that meet FEMA debris management criteria for Public Assistance reimbursement, assist communities with risk mitigation of storm-damaged trees, and retain as many viable trees as possible. The assessments help communities plan needed recovery work and document the amount of damage and cost of cleanup. This efficient and nationally accepted process helps communities obtain financial assistance more quickly through FEMA and begin the recovery process following a significant storm event.



Urban Forest Strike Team mock disaster exercise participants pose for a picture at the Lucas County Emergency Management Agency in October 2016.

ODNR hosted the trial UFST deployment along with several partners, including the Lucas County Emergency Management Agency (EMA); Michigan Department of Natural Resources; Penn State Extension; Massachusetts Tree Wardens' and Foresters' Association; and the U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry. The 2-day mock disaster exercise was conducted out of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the Lucas County EMA

with field crews practicing tree damage assessment protocol and data collection using tablets and ArcGIS Online along streets around the EMA office, in the Old West End neighborhood, and on the Toledo Museum of Art grounds. UFST Task Specialists and Team Leaders representing Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and New Hampshire trained and prepared for post-disaster deployment utilizing the latest technology, which allowed for real-time reporting to the EOC through an Operations Dashboard. The dashboard is designed to monitor crew progress and summarize tree damage and composition data as it's collected. While this technology was first piloted in Georgia, Toledo was the first trial run in the region served by the U.S. Forest Service Northeastern Area. The real-time data reporting and summary is a valuable tool for Team Leaders, local emergency managers, local urban forestry managers or city arborists, city managers, public works, and public safety managers. Following the exercise, which was also monitored by the Ohio EMA, both Lucas County and Ohio EMA planned to utilize this system in their emergency response efforts.



Urban Forest Strike Team Urban Foresters Sue Motl and Lola Lewis participate in the mock disaster exercise in October 2016.

Tree Survival School Expansion

The Urban Forestry Program looked to new partners in 2016 for an expansion of the northeastern Ohio's Tree Survival School into northwestern Ohio. The new branch held its first course in April 2017 in partnership with the city of Bowling Green, North Branch Nursery, OSU Extension, the Village of Pemberville, Advanced Tree Health, Busy Bee Tree Service, and Holden Arboretum. The intensive, 3-day course focuses on the purchasing, handling, planting, and maintenance of a new tree through the first 10 years its life. The course is geared toward anyone who purchases, plants, or cares for trees in a commercial or public landscape: city service directors, tree commission members, tree crews, cemetery workers, school groundskeepers, and other professionals. The broad curriculum includes classroom lectures, hands-on outdoor learning experiences, and a field trip to a local nursery. Tree and soil biology, selecting trees in a nursery, proper planting methods, young tree pruning, and root health are a few of the classroom and field topics covered by the course.

As with northeastern Ohio's program, the many facets of the course are only possible through valued partnerships with several organizations. The Village of Pemberville is providing long-term field plots for working with cohorts of trees from planting through 10 years in the landscape, and the city of Bowling Green opened up its Simpson Garden Park Arboretum for structural pruning instruction. North Branch Nursery provided students with an overview of its nursery practices, and Advanced Tree Health provided air-tool excavation for evaluating root conditions. The success of northeastern Ohio's Tree Survival School over the past 17 years and the great attendance at the new northwestern branch show the long-term viability of this program and positive, long-term outcomes for participating communities and organizations through proper planting techniques, better tree establishment maintenance, and increasing young tree survival rates.



Ohio Tree Survival School students visit the North Branch Nursery in April 2017.

Lake Erie Watershed Canopy Restoration Grant Program

With funding supplied by the U.S. Forest Service’s Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), ODNR administered a competitive ash tree removal and canopy restoration grant program for northeastern Ohio Lake Erie watershed communities that focused on Cuyahoga River Area of Concern (AOC) communities (AOC GLRI Action Plan Phase I priorities). The grant program intended to aid local jurisdictions in the response and recovery of urban forests from the emerald ash borer (EAB), while also addressing stormwater and surface water runoff issues in the Lake Erie watershed. The planting of trees along public rights-of-way or on other public lands were eligible reimbursement costs, while ash tree removal and administrative costs and volunteer hours directly related to the project were eligible for the required 50% match. The communities targeted for this funding in the Cuyahoga AOC are rated in Ohio’s Forest Action Plan as high-priority urban lands that have less than average urban tree canopy and greater than average population and impervious surface area.

Seven communities were awarded grant funding to address canopy loss from EAB and the significant issue of water quality degradation from runoff and its effect on the health and ecology of Lake Erie and its tributaries. All planting projects were completed in the spring of 2017. The seven communities planted a total of 922 trees, which is 142 trees more than what was proposed in their grant applications. In addition, 100 ash trees were removed as part of their match. The communities provided more than \$55,000 in overmatch in their projects. It is projected that approximately 790,000 gallons of untreated urban runoff will be intercepted by the trees planted through this project over the next 5 years (National Tree Benefits Calculator, www.treebenefits.com).

Statistical Highlights

Managing Communities:	74
Developing Communities:	236
Population of Participating Communities:	5,944,592
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	50,983

