

# Urban and Community Forestry Program 2017 Accomplishment Report – West Virginia

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## Introduction

Our Urban and Community Forestry program began in 1991 with the mission of encouraging municipal governments to begin providing long-term care for trees on public property across West Virginia. Three positions comprise the full-time urban forestry staff and deliver the program statewide to cities and towns. The Urban Forestry Coordinator, Bob Hannah, is responsible for overall program administration. We have experienced significant turnover with the Urban Forester position this year primarily due to layoffs and recalls within the West Virginia Division of Forestry. Sam Adams has returned this summer as our Urban Forester. He has the primary responsibility of educating community tree care providers with a variety of skills and knowledge necessary to successfully manage their urban forests. The Partnership Coordinator, Andy Sheetz, develops financial partnerships with corporate sponsors to fund community tree care activities, coordinates volunteer programs, and conducts conservation education programs.

We had continued success addressing several major issues impacting urban forestry and quality of life as identified in our Forest Resource Assessment. These issues include building program capacity at the community level, climate change mitigation and energy conservation, population dynamics and resource allocation, air quality, public drinking water quality and quantity, and recreation. Our greatest success stories were a result of an i-Tree assessment conducted by WVU and participation in public outreach events.

## Program Components

### Grants and Resource Assistance

- Chesapeake Bay Community Grants
- Demonstration City Grants
- Project CommuniTree
- Mountaineer Treeways Grants

### Awareness and Outreach

- Envirothon
- Boy Scout Jamboree
- Project Learning Tree
- Chesapeake Bay Forester
- Tree City USA
- Personal Contacts

#### Technical Assistance

- Mountaineer Tree Minders
- Community Support
- Workshops and Training
- Educational Material

#### Partnerships

- Cacapon Institute
- Corporate Sponsorship

#### Volunteer Participation

- Tree Advocacy Organizations
- Mountaineer Treeways Seedlings

## Key Accomplishments

### Project Narratives

**Title:** i-Tree Canopy Assessment of Tree City USAs

**Location:** Tree City USA Communities

**Objectives:** Building Program Capacity, Mitigate Climate Impacts, Reduce the Impacts of Land Use Change, Outreach

A U.S. Forest Service passthrough grant funded a study by the WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design to quantify ecosystem services provided by urban trees within Tree City USA (TCUSA) communities throughout West Virginia. The result was a better understanding of the significant economic and environmental impacts of urban tree canopy cover across the State and an effective tool to communicate the study's findings.

Division of Forestry urban staff and Dr. Greg Dahle, Associate Professor of Arboriculture and Urban Forestry, designed the study. Angela Sakazaki, undergraduate student, began the initial i-Tree assessment of 16 communities and the campus of West Virginia State University. Angela, who was at WVU as part of her study abroad program from Brazil, wanted to learn how to utilize i-Tree Canopy so that when she returned to her home university she could introduce this tool. WVU graduate students Matthew Walker and Robert Eckenrode finalized the report and developed specific recommendations for each community involved.

The study categorized each of West Virginia's TCUSA communities into one of three groups: cities with greater than 40% canopy coverage, cities between 30 and 40% canopy coverage, and cities with less than 30% canopy coverage. Nine of the 17 communities assessed already have a canopy cover greater than 40% and 6 have an existing canopy cover between 30% and 40%. Only two fall below 30%. Management objectives were developed for each community to help them set management objectives, prioritize budgets, and increase canopy coverage.

Results document that West Virginia's urban forests make significant contributions to communities, including sequestering 2,847,190 tons of carbon, which provides a total benefit of \$53,308,328 in stored carbon. Additional ecosystem services involve the annual capture of 4,348,592 pounds of pollutants with an estimated value of \$6,441,179 across TCUSA communities.

The benefits of this cooperative effort will be twofold. First, this will be valuable information for existing Tree City USA communities to share with their respective city officials and councils so that tree care efforts and investments in the program will continue. Second, this information will be utilized to encourage additional cities to become interested in the benefits of trees and begin taking steps toward

becoming Tree City USA communities. This is especially important in such a heavily forested State where many residents take their urban trees for granted. This report will help community tree managers better understand and communicate the crucial role that urban forestry fulfills in our cities and communities. Our hope is that this awareness will help drive interest in not only planting more street trees, but in maintaining green spaces along homes and businesses throughout the State.

**Title:** Community Outreach and Support

**Location:** Statewide

**Objectives:** Education; Awareness; Outreach and Building Program Capacity

Partnership Coordinator Andy Sheetz participated in more than 20 public events and training programs this year to promote an awareness of the value of trees as well as water conservation. Charleston students participated in a Project Learning Tree (PLT) day at the State Capitol where Andy conducted exercises demonstrating the many ecosystem benefits provided by urban trees. He also attended many watershed events and presented the PLT “Every Drop Counts” activity to give participants an understanding of how much water they use for everyday activities. Additional outreach efforts include instructing 240 high school students participating in the West Virginia Envirothon and working with Boy Scouts on urban forestry merit badges during the national Boy Scout Jamboree.

West Virginia Project CommuniTree (CTree) continues to be a successful partnership led by the Cacapon Institute. It promotes tree planting and education on public land through volunteerism in the Potomac Headwaters of West Virginia. The program also focuses on enhancing and promoting awareness of watershed and riparian area needs such as storm water management, water quality issues, buffer zone planting, and soil erosion. The program is volunteer based and engages stakeholders in the process of making priority decisions within their respective communities and offers a strong educational message along with a physical planting component. Fourteen groups successfully applied for CTree Kits in fall 2016. A wide range of organizations participated, from elementary school students to seasoned adult volunteers, and a total of 324 trees were planted. Twenty groups successfully applied for CTree Kits in spring 2017, resulting in 428 new trees being planted. Since 2012, CTree has organized 161 CTree planting events, planted 5,052 trees, and engaged more than 11,000 volunteers in more than 20,000 hours of volunteerism and tree stewardship activities.



*Students participate in a PLT event to learn about the benefits of trees on the grounds of the State Capitol.*



*Partnership Coordinator Andy Sheetz (center) presents the Tree Campus USA Award to West Virginia State University.*



*Students at Tomahawk Elementary learn tree values during a Project CommuniTree event.*



*A successful Project CommuniTree event at Day Park near Petersburg.*



*Urban Forestry Coordinator Bob Hannah (left) gave an Arbor Day tree planting demonstration in Follansbee, WV.*



*Urban Forester Sam Adams leads a pruning workshop for the Vienna Tree Board.*

### **Statistical Highlights**

Managing Communities:	3
Developing Communities:	59
Population of Participating Communities:	513,759
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	10,012

