Urban and Community Forestry Program
2016 Accomplishment Report – Maine

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Introduction

Project Canopy: Building Long-Term Community Forestry Programs has a vision that every community in Maine will actively and wisely manage its community forestry resources in a sustainable manner, and that all Maine citizens become well informed about the proper management of these resources and the benefits derived from them. In FY 2016, *Project Canopy* will work to improve understanding of the benefits of tree cover in urban areas and communities, encourage maintenance of trees and community forests, and expand the number of communities managing their natural resources and the population affected by program assistance. The greatest priority for this grant period is to select priority communities and begin implementing strategies 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.12, 3.5, 3.8, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.7 in the Maine Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy (June 2010). A core priority is to increase the number of communities with tree boards, ordinances, public tree inventories, management plans, and professional arborists and foresters.

Project Goal
Maintain healthy trees and woodlands in urban and community areas.

Project Objectives
1. Encourage proactive efforts at the municipal level to maintain healthy urban and community forests.
2. Provide information and technical and financial assistance to municipalities.
3. Reduce the impacts of land use change, fragmentation, and urbanization of forest landscapes.
4. Moderate the impacts of catastrophic events.
5. Protect and improve air and water quality.
6. Manage trees and forests to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
7. Maintain and enhance the economic benefits and social values of trees and forests.
8. Build and enhance partnerships that increase the effectiveness of State urban forestry programming and improve Maine's urban and community forests.

Community Accomplishments[1]

Maine communities are making long-term investments in quality of life through street tree assessment and planting.

Downtown Investment and Vacant Lots

Grant projects in Pittsfield, Camden, Dover-Foxcroft, Milo, Fort Kent, Presque Isle, Belfast, Ellsworth, and Lewiston enabled tree planting in these communities' most urbanized neighborhoods, business districts, and redevelopment sites.

Belfast

This small coastal city has been devastated by the loss of more than 30 large, old canopy trees throughout its downtown area and adjacent neighborhoods in the last 4 years as a result of old age, disease, and utility work. Planting, funded through the Maine Forest Service Project Canopy, helped re-establish trees throughout the business district and the newly rehabilitated waterfront district. The goal was to plant trees in visible locations throughout the downtown and neighborhoods inside the city's Route 1 bypass where they will make a direct and positive impact on the community and visitors alike. As a result of this planting throughout the downtown, 23 new trees were planted. The city is already seeing the value of the project in heightened community awareness and public appreciation of how significant trees are for enriching an urban environment. As a very civically engaged citizenry in this community showed, they care tremendously for their trees and volunteered over 200 hours in the planting alone. Care continues with daily watering and weeding by garden club members and the local tree advocacy group GreenStreets!. The city also strives to develop a strong sense of place in its downtown, as evidenced by the attached photo of a newly planted maackia tree next to a public art installation (photo 1).

Photo 1. New downtown trees in Belfast.

Ellsworth

Knowlton Community Park is a 6-acre urban green space in downtown Ellsworth. Planning has been underway for the park since 2010, transforming an entire neighborhood in the process. The site was home to a small school for many years. When it was torn down, the area was surveyed for the best use of the

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[1] The period covered by this report is 7/1/2015 to 6/30/2016.

land. While some advocated for returning it to the tax rolls, the majority wanted a park. The city then embarked on an ambitious fundraising plan for the area that includes a natural playground, fountain and splash pad, pavilion, bath house, field/skating rink, public art, and more. Over 100 trees were planted throughout the site to frame architecture, shade play structures, define pathways, and more. The results are outstanding. During inspection of the site, a woman and her daughter approached our team to thank us for making this investment in the community. She said she uses the park almost daily, and the only complaint she heard was about a lack of shade, something the trees will account for given a little time to grow (photo 2).

Lewiston

The Maine Forest Service continues its relationship with the TD Bank Environment Foundation and the TD Tree Days programs. In 2015, the program supported three projects in Lewiston and Portland. Lewiston planted trees in the low-income area of Marcotte Park. The area was very open, with limited shade from street trees. The area is popular for recreation due to the bike path connecting Lewiston High School, Governor Longley Elementary Schools, ball fields, and adjacent neighborhoods. The area also is home to the Tree Street Youth Center and a Somali Bantu community center. The planting of 75 trees with TD Bank volunteers served to beautify the area and will provide wildlife habitat, sound reduction, and storm water control for decades to come (photo 3).

<u>Street Tree Inventory</u>

Conducting street tree inventory and shade tree assessment is a key element in reaching program goals to improve understanding of the benefits of tree cover in urban and community areas, along with maintenance of this resource. While a primary objective of Project Canopy, it has traditionally been difficult to convince communities to make this investment in their trees. Inventory is often very costly, and the payoff takes place over a number of years. In 2015 program staff was finally able to encourage the communities of Kennebunkport, Farmington, Auburn, Norway, and Monmouth that the investment was worth it, and helped with funding of inventory and management planning according to our program narrative and Forest Action Plan:

Photo 2. Ellsworth's Knowlton Park, with brick acknowledgment of Project Canopy/USDA Forest Service funding.

Photo 3. Tree planting in Lewiston, investing in areas with large numbers of Somali Bantu immigrants.

"Assist three (3) communities in the development of comprehensive street tree management plans. The plans themselves will be supported through a separate grant, but the work effort to initiate and support the communities in the process will be part of the core program. (pgs. 145, 150, and 153; strategies 1.12, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8)."

Monmouth

During 2015 the town public works partnered with the Conservation Commission, Monmouth Academy Envirothon Program, and a forestry consultant to inventory street trees along several main roads and well-known public locations. Envirothon students helped develop a tree-measuring protocol and collect tree data. Virtually all of the trees tallied are privately owned, but growing within the public right-of-way. As a result, meaningful recommendations were made to the town public works for tree removal, maintenance, and planting throughout the community to enhance public safety, aesthetics, providing ecosystem services, and more.

Farmington

The town set out in 2015 to do a complete inventory and health assessment of its community trees on streets, parks, and around public buildings. The inventory will be used for long-term planning for the community's street trees, which has never been done before. Working with a consultant, members of the conservation commission collected data compliant with the U.S. Forest Service's tool i-Tree Streets. Data is still being analyzed for use as a management tool. The town is proud to be one of only two municipalities to claim Tree City USA status for the 40th year in 2017. Due to this claim, the conservation commission feels this is an important next step in modelling good stewardship of the community's trees.

Statistical Highlights

Managing Communities:	34
Developing Communities:	140
Population of Participating Communities:	997,441
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	8,041