

Urban and Community Forestry Program 2016 Accomplishment Report – West Virginia

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Introduction

The West Virginia 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 that delivers 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 within the West Virginia Division of Forestry. In fact, this position has been vacant for 7 of the 12 months during this reporting period. Matt Cook has just been reassigned from fire control as our new Urban Forester. He will have primary responsibility to educate 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 and coordinates volunteer programs.

Key Accomplishments

A significant undertaking this year was a review and update of our Forest Resource Assessment Plan. We had continued success addressing several major issues impacting urban forestry and quality of life as identified in this plan. 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 efforts from our Project CommuniTree Program and Project Learning Tree educational programs.

Program Components

Grants and Resource Assistance
Chesapeake Bay Community Grants
Demonstration City Grants
Project CommuniTree
Mountaineer Treeways Grants
Awareness and Outreach
Urban Forestry Intern
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



Project Narratives

Title: West Virginia Project CommuniTree

Location: Counties within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Objectives: Protect & Improve Water & Air Quality, Reduce the Impacts of Land Use Change, Mitigate Climate Impacts, Building Program Capacity

West Virginia Project CommuniTree (CTree) promotes tree plantings on public land through volunteerism and education in the Potomac Headwaters of West Virginia (Berkeley, Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Jefferson, Mineral, Morgan, and Pendleton Counties).

CTree focuses on enhancing urban tree canopy and promoting awareness of watershed and riparian area needs such as storm water management, improved water quality, buffer zone planting, and erosion prevention. CTree plantings are entirely volunteer based and engage stakeholders in the process of making priority decisions within their respective communities.

CTree builds communities from the roots up by engaging citizens in education and volunteerism. This year, CTree engaged volunteers in 33 urban tree plantings at schools, parks, road rights-of-way, business parks, and other community spaces. Together more than 2,019 volunteers planted a total of 736 urban trees at planting sites across the Potomac Highlands. Teachers and students, adults and youth, seasoned volunteers, and first-time tree planters came together to plant native trees along their streets and in their communities. It was through their dedication and hard work that CTree was able to succeed this past year. Logging 3,327 volunteer hours, these citizens exemplify *“Building Communities from the Roots Up!”*

CTree continues to provide significant benefits at the community level while addressing multiple statewide issues. The West Virginia Urban and Community Forestry Program has identified several key issues that are positively influenced by tree planting efforts and enhanced municipal forestry programs. CTree provides critical support with addressing these issues in several ways:

- Volunteer tree plantings help communities create long-term urban forestry programs.
- Planting trees in urban areas helps mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Urban trees filter and reduce particulate matter and airborne pollutants.
- Forested riparian buffers will significantly improve drinking water sources while helping to protect critical watersheds like the Chesapeake Bay.
- Increasing canopy cover can mitigate storm water runoff, slow water flow within urban areas, promote groundwater infiltration, and reduce flooding.

CTree is a tremendous success that demonstrates the significant role that urban trees, volunteers, and collaboration all play in enhancing the quality of life for West Virginians.



Spring 2016 WV Project CommuniTree volunteer tree planters at Pleasant View Elementary School.



Students at Page Jackson Elementary learn about trees during a Project CommuniTree event.



Installing deer protection is a fun job for kids at the Fairways West HOA Project CommuniTree event.

Title: West Virginia Envirothon – Urban Forestry

Location: Statewide

Objectives: Education, Awareness, Outreach

Through his duties as Partnership Coordinator, Andy Sheetz utilizes Project Learning Tree (PLT) to teach students and volunteers about the ecosystem benefits provided by both urban and rural forests. He strives to make learning fun for people of all ages through interactive exercises that often involve scientific concepts, math, and biology. Andy also provides “train the trainer” instruction to West Virginia Master Naturalists and other educators. West Virginia Master Naturalists volunteer in State parks where they lead nature hikes, give presentations on native flora and fauna, and educate the public about the natural world around us. Their PLT training includes tree biology, making paper, how animals depend on trees for camouflage, and various products made from trees. Upon completion, all participants are able to provide customized instruction for students from pre-K to eighth grade in PLT as well as adults in 96 different hands-on activities. Middle and high school teachers received similar instruction, allowing them to incorporate PLT as part of their classroom curriculums. Andy has also reached out to the parents of homeschooled students and conducted training sessions that enable parents to share PLT lessons with their children.

Additionally, Andy attended numerous watershed festivals across the State to promote urban forestry and deliver an appreciation of tree benefits. Instruction at these festivals is typically a collaborative effort that includes staff from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and Division of Natural Resources as well as Forestry. These festivals are often held at schools where an average of 100 to 150 5th, 6th, and 7th grade students rotate through different learning opportunities that cover a variety of environmental topics. This past year, Andy has presented 17 PLT workshops and training programs across the State to 1,446 individuals involving 5,302 hours of training that has created an awareness and appreciation of forestry for citizens of all ages.



Homeschoolers participate in a PLT exercise as “trees” trying to gather enough resources to survive.

Statistical Highlights

Managing Communities:	2
Developing Communities:	62
Population of Participating Communities:	523,210
Volunteer Assistance Generated (hours):	7,237
Tree City USA Communities:	15
Tree City Growth Awards:	3
Tree Campus USA:	1

