

# FORESTRY NOTES SPECIAL REPORT



National Association of  
Conservation Districts

## GROWING OPPORTUNITIES IN URBAN FORESTRY



Urban forestry not only provides a growing metropolitan population (now more than 80% of Americans) with a place to play and enjoy nature within our cities; urban trees may be our best tool to educate the general public on the essential benefits our forests provide — clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, wood and paper products.

But same as public and private forestlands, our urban and community forests require management. Conservation districts are helping to meet that need.

According to a comprehensive forestry survey conducted by NACD in 2015, more than

half of America's 3,000 conservation districts are engaged in some form of urban forestry work. Twenty-eight percent of respondents indicated they organize annual workshops or urban forestry demonstrations; roughly that same percentage indicated involvement in annual urban tree planting.

The need to tend to our urban trees will continue to grow in coming years. Cities are incorporating green infrastructure into planning goals and the next generation is demanding more green space built into their living environments. Conservation districts are ready for the challenge!



Sustainable Urban  
Forests Coalition

NACD is a proud member of the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC) whose broad and growing membership represents urban planners, educators, arborists, landscape architects, public works and utility associations, air and water quality experts, foresters, scientists, health professionals, tree care companies, landscape and nursery associations, conservationists and community advocates.

SUFC's mission is to convene and mobilize this diverse network of national organizations to foster thriving communities through healthy urban and community forests.

### Guest Column



**Dan Lambe,**  
Arbor Day  
Foundation  
President

## A call for courage

In November, the Arbor Day Foundation hosted the 11th annual Partners in Community Forestry Conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma, bringing together more than 450 urban for-

estry practitioners, advocates, and municipal leaders from around the country — and the world — to learn, share, and network. This gathering is the best opportunity to take the pulse of the urban and community forestry movement in America and to find within us the courage to lead that movement forward.

In Tulsa, Dr. David Nowak, lead researcher at the U.S. Forest Service–Northern Research Station in Syracuse, New York, shared soon-to-be-published data on state-by-state urban tree cover gains and losses between 2009 and 2014. What he confirmed is something many of us who work in urbanizing areas of the country see every day: urban land uses continue to occupy more and more land at the edge of urban ar-

eas, and tree cover on that land is often a casualty. While no surprise, the work ahead — to use trees and forests as part of the solution to a range of environmental and social issues — can appear daunting. It will take courage.

Conservation districts in many areas are already wrestling with challenges such as urbanization, changes in land use and land cover, and serving a new set of residents and landowners — many of whom have little experience or knowledge of trees, forests, and their benefits. In rural communities, the challenge can be the reverse: dwindling populations make it harder for towns and villages to care for public trees. Your expertise is needed, now more than ever. And so is your courage.

# Can conservation districts help satisfy the growing need for technical assistance?

In 2015, for the first time, most of the world's population resided in cities. By 2050, 80% of the world's population will live in cities. The urban growth projection for the U.S. predicts that by 2050, major urban areas will coalesce into 11 megaregions.

Many jurisdictions are adopting urban tree canopy goals to mitigate the urban heat island, help manage stormwater, encourage walking and exercise, and achieve other favorable outcomes in cities. Attaining these goals can be daunting. While landowner assistance to non-industrial private forest landowners is increasingly a challenge in the face of parcelization and fragmentation, it is even more so in urban areas. In Philadelphia, for example, the "non-industrial private urban forest landowner" owns 67% of land, comprised of more than 459,000 private residential parcels. "As most existing and potential tree canopy in cities is on residential private property, and as land man-



agement decisions are most frequently made at the parcel scale, the need for parcel-level technical assistance to support attainment of urban tree canopy goals is critical," said Mike Galvin, project coordinator for the U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station.

Where do landowners go for technical assistance? They may be able to call an extension agent, or state, county, or city forestry personnel. The latter may even be required if there is some type of approval required to remove or treat a tree. But most frequently, this technical assistance is sought through a private sector service provider – "I am going to call a person to come look at my tree." This framework is often based on a landowner requesting a price

to perform a specific service rather than asking for broader technical assistance for a management plan to plant, maintain, or remove a variety of plants across the property.

"Urban landowner technical assistance in support of urban tree canopy goals presents a growth opportunity for conservation districts," said Galvin. "It fits with conservation districts' mission to coordinate assistance from all available sources - public and private, local, state, and federal - to develop locally-driven solutions to natural resource concerns."

Districts are encouraged to reach out to the city forester or arborist in metro areas to learn whether there is an urban tree canopy goal and how the conservation district can help coordinate technical assistance to support these local natural resource management objectives.

**"Urban landowner technical assistance in support of urban tree canopy goals presents a growth opportunity for conservation districts."**



Mike Galvin  
Project Coordinator  
Baltimore Field Station  
Northern Research Station,  
USDA Forest Service





## Collecting data

The City of Elk River worked with Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to perform a community tree survey. Data is collected on every maintained, public and private tree within the city limits, including species, trunk diameter, and crown diameter. This detailed inventory can be used to formulate effective management plans for tree care in each community and help guide future planting as the city strives to increase diversity.

The district trained 16 volunteers on tree ID, tree measurements, hazard tree assessment and how to operate the Arc Data Collector application on tablets or

smart phones. “The result is a powerful tool that continues to be used by the City to address hazard trees, prioritize ash management, quantify budgetary implications of treating ash for EAB, and to update the database as trees are removed, planted, or pruned,” said Sherburne SWCD Forest Resource Specialist Gina Hugo.

Sherburne SWCD plans to replicate this project on a small scale with a local Minnesota homeowners association. The district needs just one day to do the training; then volunteers from the homeowners association will do the work. “It is a way to empower members of the community with information to make strategic management decisions resulting in a more diverse, resilient urban tree canopy,” said Hugo. “The ultimate goal is to maintain and increase all the associated environmental benefit of this green infrastructure.”

## Dealing with pests

Belmont County Soil and Water Conservation District organized a program in October to educate residents about emerald ash borer (EAB), including information

about its life cycle and how to properly manage ash trees on their property.

Belmont County SWCD Wildlife and Forestry Specialist Liza Butler occasionally receives calls from landowners concerned about the health of their ash. The workshop helped pair more than a dozen landowners with area experts. “It was a big success,” said Butler. “They left with a better idea for how to manage their woods.”

Instructors included Butler, Ohio State University Extension agriculture and natural resource educators Mark Landefeld and Dan Lima, and Ohio Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Forestry Service Forester Jeremy Scherf, who helped organize this workshop in several Ohio counties.



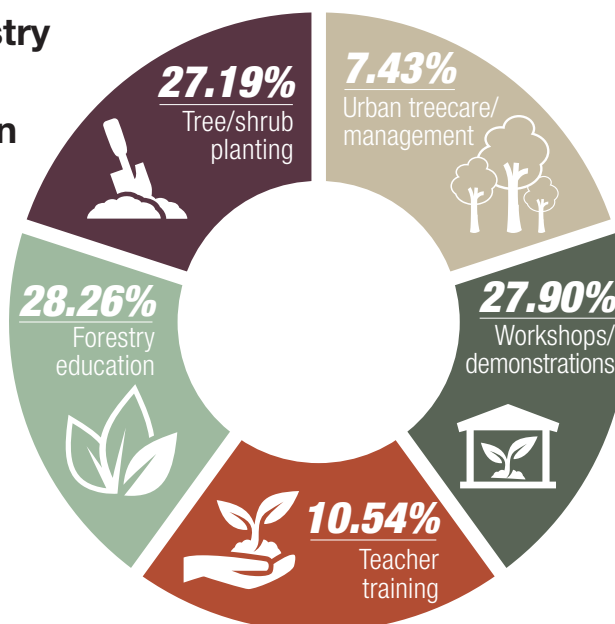
## Caring for trees

The Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (RCD) hosted a series of workshops to help teach residents how to care for trees during drought. The series was offered in partnership with the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District. One workshop, held at Cal State San Bernardino’s Demonstration Garden, offered tips for pruning and tree care, and included a plant giveaway and rain barrel raffle. More than 100 people attended the free series.

“Our office is located in the Redlands, with a lot of beautiful old trees,” said Jasmine Orozco, Inland Empire RCD education coordinator. “We wanted to focus on helping people care for these trees, especially when there are local watering restrictions.”

City of Colton Arborist and Water Conservation Specialist Rob Waner offered pruning techniques and tips to help participants evaluate the health of their trees.

**What urban forestry service(s) does your conservation district provide?**  
(check all that apply)



Data from 2015 comprehensive conservation district forestry survey





**83% of Americans live in urban areas**

**136 million acres of urban forests in U.S.**

 Trees can filter up to **80% of phosphorus** out of stormwater before it can pollute waterways

 One million mature trees around American residences save approximately **\$2 billion** annually in reduced energy costs.

 Urban trees remove over **710,000 tons** of air pollution per year in the U.S.

 Green industries have an annual estimated economic impact of **\$175.26 billion**.

 In New York City, the rate of early childhood asthma is **29% lower** for every 343 trees per square kilometer.

**These resources offer additional information related to urban forestry:**



**Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC)**  
<http://urbanforestcoalition.org>



**U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program**

The Urban & Community Forestry (UCF) Program supports forest health for all of our Nation's forests, creates jobs, contributes to vibrant regional wood economies, enhances community resilience and preserves the unique sense of place in cities and towns of all sizes  
[www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf](http://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf)



**Partnering for Forests**

A look at the U.S. Forest Service's Cooperative Forestry Program and its partners. The 56-page booklet, produced by American Forests, includes a section on urban forestry with success stories and data.

[http://www.americanforests.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Coop-Report-2017\\_Web-Edition.pdf](http://www.americanforests.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Coop-Report-2017_Web-Edition.pdf)



**TreeBaltimore**

TreeBaltimore serves as the umbrella organization for all City agencies, private organizations and individuals in their effort to increase the tree canopy of Baltimore. To reach our goal of 40% tree canopy cover by 2037, we partner with individual homeowners as well as communities, schools, and businesses.

<http://treebaltimore.org/>



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