

## Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program

### Program Update

September 2019 – December 2019

Desired Future Condition 1: <i>Biological Diversity</i> Conserve biological diversity across all landscapes.				
Strategies		H	M	L
1.1	Identify and promote stewardship of community green spaces such as town forests, village greens, and parks.	X		
1.2	Expand awareness and implementation of planning for urban and community forests at local and regional scales.	X		
1.3	Promote intentional development in villages and downtowns that support sustainable urban and community forests.		X	
1.4	Recommend and create model urban and community forestry language for inclusion in town plans, local regulations, and state planning documents.	X		

#### Town Forests Recreation Planning:

- Toolkit: The [Toolkit](#) is live!!
- Case Studies: Worked with an intern to develop case studies for all 10 pilot communities- check them out in the Town Forest Stories Pod
- Community Forestry Summit: Over 50 people joined us for a daylong summit to release the town forest recreation planning toolkit, network and identify challenges and opportunities for a regional community forestry network
- Planning for Town Forest Educational Events: Planning is underway for 10 events in VT Town Forests in 2019-2020. Events will include:
  - Trail Design Day in Hardwick (tentatively scheduled for early February and will include the 'official' release of the VT Trail Design Guide, in partnership with Trails and Greenways Council
  - Town Forests and Downtowns Summit- a workshop to explore the connection between TFs and downtown economic development, possibly in partnership with UNH.
  - Mountain Biking in Town Forests- 101 for community volunteers. Exploring the myths and misconceptions, opportunities and challenges of integrating mountain biking into the town forest (Marshfield will be hosting)

- Webinar Series- on various components of the toolkit

### **Town Forests Leadership Training**

- FPR, UVM Extension, and VLT will be partnering on a new LSR grant Community Forests as Models of Stewardship. The goal of this project is to highlight community forests as models of stewardship through planning, developing, mapping and promoting stewardship demonstration sites, addressing various management challenges, new educational programming that train community leaders on stewardship, and professionals on working with communities.

### **Municipal Technical Assistance**

- Ash Inventory: We continue to support towns statewide in ash inventory efforts. Between September and December, we worked with Ferrisburgh, North Hero, and West Windsor to plan for, train volunteers, or conduct an inventory.
- EAB Planning: We continue to support towns statewide in planning for EAB. Between September and December, we worked with or provided guidance to East Montpelier, Calais, Middlebury, and Londonderry on planning for the impacts of the pest. We also present to municipal staff via Regional Planning Commissions -- we continue to work with Central Vermont RPC this quarter and will present to the Southern Windsor RPC in December.

### **Forest Planning**

- Forest Integrity Project: This USFS funded project continues to move forward. Project partners are Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative (FEMC), Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC), the Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC), VT Fish & Wildlife, and VT Forests, Parks & Recreation. In October, partners developed a survey to be sent to municipal partners statewide to gather information about how municipal planning can work in concert with the forest products industry to support working landscapes in Vermont. Partners will meet in December to discuss the final stage of the project.

<b>Desired Future Condition 2: <i>Forest Health and Productivity</i></b> Maintain and enhance forest ecosystem health and productivity.				
Strategies		H	M	L
2.1	Identify and facilitate research that improves our understanding of Vermont's urban and community forests.			X
2.2	Monitor for urban and community forest health and productivity including urban forest inventory and analysis (Urban FIA).		X	

2.3	Survey for potential urban and community forestry health threats, including non-native invasive species.		X	
2.4	Expand resources to assist communities to prepare for, mitigate, and recover from emergency events to urban and community forests including severe weather and invasive pests.	X		
2.5	Increase communities' capacity to create resilient urban and community forests including growing or acquiring high-quality trees.		X	
2.6	Prevent the introduction, slow the spread, and eradicate where appropriate non-native invasive species that impact urban and community forests.	X		

#### **Urban Forest Health Outreach and Education:**

- VTinvasives website:
  - Continued to improve the structure of EAB information on VTinvasives.
  - VTinvasives E-News: 1 produced.
  - Continued to support 'Report It' submissions.
  - Managing listserv to provide updates to EAB Infested Area Map and state news.
  - Matrix of website content and FPR/UVM staff was developed to ensure that all links and resources are checked and updated twice annually.
- First Detectors: Advanced First Detector trainings were held on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> in Montpelier, Bristol, and Hartford to train volunteers on how to conduct initial EAB site visits, with a goal of screening suspect trees to ease the burden on limited state staff. 17 individuals were trained and will regionally volunteer to confirm ash identification and take a series of quality photographs to submit to the online VTinvasives Report It system, providing crucial information to allow staff to determine whether a comprehensive site visit is necessary.
- Initiated a monthly bulletin focused on activities of Forest Pest First Detectors as a means for them to share information and ideas for activities with one another.
- EAB Outreach Events:
  - EAB Public Meeting, Ripton
  - EAB Public Meeting, Middlebury
  - EAB Public Meeting, West Windsor
  - Ash Tree ID and EAB Talk, Shelburne
  - Training for VTrans road crews on EAB and hazard ash, Royalton
- EAB Response

- Purple Prism Traps (partnership with VAAFM and FPR): 30 Forest Pest First Detectors trained; 78 traps installed and monitored in 30 towns all around state; traps were monitored twice over the summer and were taken down after the end of EAB flight season. Two EAB were discovered in two different traps in Alburgh, making Alburgh a new confirmed infestation site. EAB were also found in a trap in Derby, which had already been confirmed as an infestation site.
  - EAB Site Visit Form: UCF staff worked with ANR IT to develop an app-based form for partners to fill out while conducting EAB site visits that will store and track consistent information about where site visits are occurring statewide.
- Museum Signs: We created four visually engaging movable interpretive signs for use on trails at museums and nature centers. The signs are moveable and have been up most recently at the North Branch Nature Center, the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum, and the Birds of Vermont Museum in September. The signs were such a hit that we had additional signs made that will be available for communities to use in their town forests and parks.

### **EAB Planning**

- Participated in FPR's EAB Response Team planning meeting and development of master plan.
- Reviewed a proposed RFP from VTrans for the development of an EAB management plan for all state roads.
- Participating in regular meetings with utility companies to discuss EAB planning and preparedness.

Desired Future Condition 3: <i>Forest Products and Ecosystem Services</i>				
Maintain and enhance forest contribution to ecosystem services.				
Strategies		H	M	L
3.1	Facilitate opportunities to market and utilize urban wood including after natural disasters or pest infestations.			x
3.2	Facilitate opportunities for integrating agroforestry and urban and community forestry including integration with local food production.			x
3.3	Promote awareness and use of urban and community forestry practices for water quality protection in new land development and retrofits including low impact development (LID) and green stormwater infrastructure (GSI).	x		

3.4	Promote awareness and use of urban and community forestry practices to mitigate urban air temperatures and pollution.		X	
3.5	Promote awareness and stewardship of recreation in town forests and other public places.		X	
3.6	Explore opportunities for forest carbon credits for urban and community forestry in Vermont.			x
3.7	Identify and promote climate mitigation and adaptation strategies for urban and community forests.		X	

#### **Water Quality:**

- **Resilient Right-of-Way Grant:**
  - **Urban Component:**
    - **Green Street Vermont Guide:** Guide is finished and has been printed. Digital downloads are available on [VT UCF's website](#) alongside new video tutorials on the first 10 (of 11) sections of the guide. Becky Tharp from Watershed Consultants has been contracted to do at least four presentations at conferences within the coming year to get the guide into the hands of the right audiences in Vermont. In October she presented VLCT's Planning & Zoning Conference in South Burlington to an audience of over 50. In November she presented in Barre at a Transportation Planning Initiative (RPC Transportation Planners gathering) to an audience of 20.
    - **Technical Assistance:** Work was finished in Colchester and Winooski. Essex Junction and Montpelier are the final two towns receiving technical assistance and will be wrapped up by the end of the year.
  - **Rural Component:**
    - **Assessments and Plans:** Provided in-person review and updated action plans regarding rural road vegetation to seven participating communities: Calais, East Montpelier, Stowe, Hyde Park, Tinmouth, Johnson and Marshfield. Conducted a roadside ash inventory in Plainfield during the 2019 field season and scheduling public meetings and inventory review for January 2020. Conducted field research in Panton and creating roadside vegetation recommendations as related to farming practices and stormwater runoff in the ROW. Charlotte participated in rural roadside ash inventory training in the summer of 2018 as part of the Resilient Right-of-Way grant.
    - **Outreach:** Based on the assessments completed, we are building a list of sceneries and correlated management practices and processes to include in new rural roadside vegetation management guide to be released by June 2020.
- **Lake Champlain Forest Watershed Management Partnership:** Hiring is underway for the new Watershed Forestry Program Coordinator, a position based out of UVM's SEA Grant, funded in part by American Forests, PUR Project and UVM Extension.

**Desired Future Condition 4: *Land Ethic***

Maintain and enhance an ethic of respect for the land, sustainable use, and exemplary management.

Strategies		H	M	L
4.1	Expand opportunities for students to learn about and engage in urban and community forestry through educational programming, service-learning, and internships.		x	
4.2	Support awareness and understanding of the social, economic and environmental benefits provided by urban and community forests and active engagement in their stewardship.			
4.3	Enhance relations with public media partners and efforts in social media.		X	
4.4	Facilitate Arbor Day in Vermont.		X	
4.5	Facilitate urban and community forest and forestry educational programming for educators, homeowners, municipalities, green industry professionals, and volunteers.			
4.6	Facilitate Vermont's Big Tree program.			x
4.7	Train and support urban and community forestry leaders including town Tree Wardens and Tree Boards.	x		
4.8	Train and support volunteer citizen scientists engaged in urban and community forestry.			
4.9	Engage professionals in urban and community forestry including arborists, planners, landscape architects, and foresters.			
4.10	Recognize urban and community forestry champions and model projects.		X	
4.11	Conduct technical assistance to communities to help them understand, evaluate, and/or implement actions to advance sustainable urban and community forestry programs.			

**Arbor Day:**

- Arbor Day Conference: Planning for 2020 Conference is under way! Keynote speaker has been selected and call for presentation proposals was sent out.
- Growing Works of Art Contest: 2020 Contest announcement was sent out to all middle and elementary schools. Contest entries are due March 13, 2020. This year's theme is *Trees are Superheroes- Share your Tree Story!*
- New Recognition Programs: Tree Campus k-12 and Tree Campus Healthcare have been introduced by the Arbor Day Foundation; the program is helping to promote.

#### **Tree Wardens:**

- Tree Warden Summit: Held on Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup> in Berlin. There were 38 participants; outcomes include: developing a tree warden manual, hosting an annual summit, providing workshops at the Arbor Day Conference.
- TW Statute Amendments: Amendments were revisited ahead of the 2020 legislative session. Two tenured tree wardens provided input and the statutes received an extensive legal review from FPR's attorney. FPR Commissioner Snyder signed off and the amendments were sent to Speaker Johnson in early November. We are hopeful that this is the year!

#### **Energy Saving Trees:**

- 2020: We are exploring sustainable funding sources; to run the program this year we will allocate some of our annual grant funds to support the program temporarily and will be seeking municipal partners in the new year.
- RGGI: Will submitted a proposal to the Public Service Board to request funds from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative to support EST.

#### **Vermont Big Tree Program:**

- We are updating the VT Big Trees Program. We worked with ANR IT to develop an app-based form to record measurements and tree data. We will be meeting with ANR IT to discuss integrating the archaic database with this new database in the coming months.
- We remeasured 6 trees in Chittenden County and measured an additional 3 big tree nominations.
- We will be presenting at a County Foresters meeting in early 2020 to discuss their involvement in maintaining the VT Big Trees list.

#### **Forestry Education Programs**

- Teens Reaching Youth (TRY) - Forests and Trees: Training date is set for December 5. We have 4 teams of teens this year. This may be the last year of this program. Lauren Traister (UVM EXT) coordinates this program and she is looking for more funding.
- ourVTwoods.org: Planning for the 5-part podcast is underway! Partner storyboarding meeting is scheduled for early December and we are looking at partnering with UVM's Center for Research on Vermont- Storytelling and Podcast program. We continue to work with Tamarack Media to design and build the online archived webinar library to support licensed foresters with on-demand VT Forester Continuing Education Credits (CEUs).
- Professional Webinar Series: Continues through the fall with presentations schedule on Invasives Earthworms and White Ash Resistance to EAB.

- Backyard Woods: 48 families participated in the course this fall. We hosted 4 in-person field walks in Chittenden, South Hero, Colchester, and Barnet.
- Arborist Support: UCF developed and released [Ash Tree Protection Services Contact List](#) in October – lists professionals who are ISA Certified Arborists as well as hold VT pesticide applicator certification and are offering treatment of ash for EAB statewide.
- Women Owning Woodlands VT - a new partner initiative of VT UCF, Vermont Coverts, Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Woodlands Association, UVM Extension and Women's Agricultural Network

#### **Media/Communications:**

- Social Media: Continue to support our social media accounts. We have now integrated the whole team in contributing and rotate leads every week.
- Newsletters: Bimonthly TREEmail and biweekly VolunTREEmail continued. We did a comprehensive update to our TREEmail listserv.
- Website: Continue to maintain and improve the site - [www.vtcommunitforestry.org](http://www.vtcommunitforestry.org). Our site was hacked in October and was down for several days; the issue has been resolved but we are dealing with some residual issues with certain browsers/individuals trying to access the site.
- Across the Fence: UCF's Kate Forrer was featured in an [October episode on Active Forest Management in Town Forests](#) and ourVTwoods.org

#### **Volunteer Support**

##### **Students and Educators:**

- Proposed a project to Antioch University's environmental graduate program for spring 2020; waiting to hear if our project will be selected by a team of graduate students.

#### **Financial Assistance to Communities:**

- 2019 Grants: As needed, supporting 20 communities currently working on their EAB Planning Grant projects.
- 2020 Grants: We announced two grant programs this year, for a combined \$70,000 available in cost-share grants: our traditional [Caring for Canopy Grants](#) range \$1,000-\$5,000 and can fund a wide variety of community projects and the special [Emerald Ash Borer Management grants](#) will fund three municipalities within the EAB Infested Area at \$15,000 each to conduct ash tree removals and replant trees of different species to offset the loss of the ash. Proposals for both are due January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

#### **Desired Future Condition 5: *Legal, Institutional, and Economic Framework***

Vermont has a legal, institutional, and economic framework in place for forest conservation and sustainability.

##### **Strategies**

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5.1	Expand funding opportunities to support local, state, and regional efforts for urban and community forest stewardship, health, and sustainability.		x	
5.2	Educate state leadership of programming efforts, opportunities, and challenges.	x		
5.3	Educate communities and citizens about urban and community forest policies, rules, and laws including Vermont's Tree Warden statutes.		x	
5.4	Advocate for policies, programs, and initiatives that assist in urban and community forest stewardship, health, and sustainability.		x	
5.5	Establish an appropriate level of infrastructure and staffing to meet changing needs.		x	
5.6	Foster strategic partnerships to deliver innovative urban and community forestry programming.	x		

### **Financial and Programming Partnerships**

UVM Extension: 2019/2020 grant agreement is still in progress.

#### **US Forest Service:**

- Completed and submitted annual reporting to USFS: we provided direct educational, technical, or financial assistance to 110 communities and an estimated 17,425 hours of service were provided towards urban and community forestry efforts in our communities. Towns we interacted most with within our program in 2019 were Shelburne, Middlebury, and Montpelier.
- Serving as co-chair of urban forestry assessment committee and serving as a liaison for technology transfer.
- Assisted in the evaluation of pilot course of online iTree Academy, intended for municipal staff and professionals, and planning for next round of the iTree Academy.
- We submitted a US Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) grant proposal focused on rural roadside forest management and town capacity.

Vermont Nursery & Landscape Association: Serving on the board of VNLA; participated in two fall meetings and a 10-year strategic planning effort.

### **Program Staffing:**

- Maintaining weekly check-ins and quarterly face-to-face planning meetings.
- Joanne Garton was hired as the Technical Assistance Coordinator.
- Lina Swislocki was hired as a consultant to develop Town Forest Recreation Planning Case Studies.
- Elise and Joanne attended the Partners in Community Forestry Conference and USFS National Urban Forestry Program Meeting in Cleveland, OH in

November.

- Ginger Nickerson participated in two day training on dialogue education and program evaluation with [Global Learning Partners](#) in October, and a one day training: “Developing Cultural Competency from the Inside Out” through UMass Extension in November as part of her service on UVM Extension’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity committee
- Kate complete her first semester in UVM’s EdD program using our work in community forestry to explore issues of social justice, inequity and leadership.

**Council:**

- Sent out reappointment letters; all current Council members will remain and there are no vacancies on the Council
- New Council Leadership Committee was elected: Cecilia Danks and Richard Amore will remain for another term and Bonnie Waninger and Melissa Levy are joining the Committee
- Proposed minor Council bylaw amendment, regarding timeline for when minutes are sent out post-meeting.