

## Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program

### Program Update

September 2020 – December 2020

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.
- Planning for Town Forest Educational Events: Two events remain:
  - Bench Building Workshop: this event is on hold until 2021.
  - Community Governance Training: will pick up planning this winter.

#### Town Forests Stewardship Demonstration and Leadership Training

- FPR, UVM Extension, and VLT have begun work on a new LSR grant titled 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 trains community leaders on stewardship, and professionals on working with communities.

- Forester Facilitation Training: We are developing a survey to go out to forestry professionals to get a better sense as to what gaps and needs this training can help address. Based on the information from the survey, we will be developing and delivering 2 trainings in early 2021.
- Community Leadership Training: Curriculum development is underway for a leadership training program for municipal officials and volunteers engaged in town forest stewardship planning, management activities and decision making.
- Demonstration Project Library: We are working with partners to develop a template for a demonstration library to document and highlight best practices in forest planning and management in town forests in Vermont.
- Summer intern (hosted by VLT) has been working on compiling demonstration site case studies and best practices.

### **Municipal Technical Assistance**

- Ash Inventory: We continue to support towns statewide in ash inventory efforts. Between September 2020 and December 2020, we continued to support ash inventory training to case-by-case support. We have provided technical assistance over email and phone to 5 towns and provided ash inventory application training virtually to volunteers in Springfield, Plainfield, Mount Holly, Peacham, Bristol, and Shelburne. We also trained 7th and 8th graders at the Shelburne Community School to perform ash inventories on their school property and create an EAB management plan for the school. Teacher Lucy Allen imputed the students' data into the statewide ash inventory database. Lastly, we developed a short video on our ash inventory tool and basic data collection guidelines available on our Youtube page here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6p8YRd9xZIQ>.
- EAB Planning: We continue to support towns statewide in planning for EAB. Between September 2020 and December 2020, we provided online presentations on a variety of aspects related to municipal EAB planning and ash tree management for the towns of East Montpelier, Bristol, Shelburne, and Williston, as well as to about a dozen towns coordinated by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission.
- In response to the new EAB detections in St. Albans, West Rutland, Shaftsbury, and Richmond, in this quarter UCF staff directly contacted municipal clerks or town managers in over 40 municipalities to make them aware of the expanded Confirmed Infested Area and to answer any questions.

### **Shade Tree Preservation Plans**

● As part of the guidance UCF is providing related to the new tree warden statutes, we will be working with 10 selected municipalities over the new year to develop shade tree preservation plans. The components and goals of the plans are outlined in the statutes, but we will work with each community individually to ultimately develop a suite of templates as more communities consider adopted a plan. The first five towns selected have reached out unsolicited (Monkton, St. Albans City, Charlotte, Calais, and East Montpelier) and letters of agreement are underway; we will develop an application process for the additional five towns to launch in the new year.

### **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. Project updates during this quarter include:

- We applied for and received one final extension on the grant; new end date is 6/30/22.
- VNRC's contract will be extended until May 2021 to accommodate one final deliverable - the completion of the updated *Community Strategies for VT's Forests and Wildlife* guide.
- UVM's contract expired in September; Jen Pontius and Jim Duncan presented their work to a small group in October and we are awaiting their final report and deliverables.
- UCF will be utilizing funding through this project to contract with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to support the new tree warden statutes, as well as partnering with 10 municipalities to draft shade tree preservation plans (more on this below).

Desired Future Condition 2: <i>Forest Health and Productivity</i> 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.

### **EAB Response & Planning**

- Vermont utility companies continue to meet quarterly on EAB; the last quarterly meeting was in October and focused on COVID-19 impacts to fieldwork, utility company revenue, and budgetary impacts. GMP continues to remove ash trees within the central Vermont infested area. The utilities continue to share resources and information on EAB management in Vermont and nationwide.
- UCF released a suite of [6 case studies](#) about how municipalities have and are managing for EAB here in Vermont and beyond.
- UCF worked with FPR to produce a 1-pager as a reminder of Slow-the-Spread recommendations (forest products industry as intended audience), which is on hold before release.
- UCF coordinated with FPR Forest Health and other programs to deliver a Forestry Division EAB Update and to host a discussion with USFS's EAB expert Nate Siegert in November.

### **EAB Outreach**

- All in-person EAB Outreach events for the past quarter were cancelled due to COVID.
- Checklist and Resources for Managing EAB in Town Forests: UCF is continuing to work with County Foresters, FPR Forest Health, and the Vermont Land Trust foresters to create a planning guide to help municipalities make good silviculture decisions for Town Forests in the context of EAB. The final resource will live on the UCF website and is currently in final review stages.
- The FPOP program is planning an education campaign targeted to recreationists for the coming year. This will consist of a combination of press releases and social media campaigns targeting birders, nordic skiers, snowmobilers, hikers, fisherpeople, hunters, mountain bikers and other outdoor recreationist groups about the signs and symptoms and how to report multiple invasive forest insects. It will include information on EAB as well as other pests such as Asian long horned beetle, spotted lantern fly, and oak wilt.
- We will be coordinating another EAB Awareness Week this spring, from May 15th to 22nd

<b>Desired Future Condition 3: <i>Forest Products and Ecosystem Services</i></b>				
Maintain and enhance forest contribution to ecosystem services.				
<b>Strategies</b>		<b>H</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>L</b>
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:
  - This 5-year Landscape Scale Restoration grant project is officially COMPLETE!
  - The Resilient Right-of-Ways Guide is the final deliverable; available in hard copy or [online](#).
  - We had our project review and share-out with our US Forest Service rep in November; the feedback was very positive and now the focus is continuing to promote the resources and building upon the lessons learned.

Lake Champlain Forest Watershed Management Partnership: Alison Adams was hired in March 2020 as Watershed Forestry Coordinator. The position will be based out of UVM's SEA Grant, funded in part by American Forests, PUR Project and UVM Extension. We have 2 years of funding for the position. UCF staff have not yet connected with Alison, but hope to meet with her over the winter months to discuss collaboration.

### **Energy Saving Trees/Vermont Community Canopy**

- 2020: The free tree pick-up date was September 19<sup>th</sup> in Brattleboro and Bradford. Joanne and Gwen led the no-contact events, with assistance from community volunteers. 300 trees were distributed to 140 residents/families.
- Funding: We revised and resubmitted our proposal to request funds for this program from Vermont's Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative annual funding; in November we had a call with the air quality division at DEC to discuss a promising funding source for the next two years.

**FPR Climate Forester:** Ali Kosiba was hired as FPR's Climate Forester this spring; UCF has been included on her Climate Advisory Team and plans to meet with Ali soon to discuss future collaborations. Ali will provide some presentations for the Backyard Woods Course this winter.

Desired Future Condition 4: <i>Land Ethic</i>				
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

- Growing Works of Art Contest: Entries are coming in! Theme: Healthy Trees, Healthy Lives.

## Tree Wardens

- Tree Warden Statute Amendments: The amendments passed! Governor Scott signed the [new legislation](#) into law in early October.
- UCF staff met with two attorneys from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to discuss a package of guidance for municipalities and tree wardens regarding the new tree warden statutes; we are in the process of developing a scope of work and will be contracting with VLCT.
- UCF staff held a webinar section-by-section read through of the new tree warden statutes with ~40 attendees.
- We have updated our web resources with information on the new legislation.

## Vermont Big Tree Program

- We are updating the VT Big Trees Program, but our work with ANR's IT gurus is on hold (lower priority than some major projects). We have received many, many nominations over the past couple of months (more people spending time in the woods?), so we are hoping to move on this as soon as possible.
- We will be discussing our intended plan with the regional County Forester leads in December for feedback and buy-in.

## Forest Pest First Detectors

- Purple Prism Traps: Forest protection helped us distribute **120 traps to 44 FPDF volunteers, in 50 Towns in 12 counties** this year. The traps were taken down at the end of the EAB flight season. Seven EAB were identified in traps this year in St. Albans, Alburgh, Isle La Motte, Marshfield, and Shaftsbury.
- On-Line FPDF Course  
We are in the process of creating an on-line Forest Pest First Detector course. It will be offered in the winter and the spring/summer seasons. The winter course will cover foundational concepts about invasive forest insects, EAB, hemlock wooly adelgid, Asian long horned beetle and opportunities for volunteering. The spring/summer course will cover EAB, ALB, spotted lantern fly, beech leaf disease, and oak wilt as well as volunteer opportunities.
- On-line Community Volunteer Toolkit: We are also creating an on-line "toolkit" which is essentially a compilation of mostly pre-existing resources that dedicated volunteers can access on topics such as: how to work with municipalities on preparedness and management plans; how to train volunteers to conduct tree inventories; how to design and implement public outreach and education campaigns;

## Backyard Woods Course

- We offered a fall course to approximately 50 participants; in lieu of the in-person field walks, we hosted 4 live Forester Q&As and 2 live evening discussions. Participant feedback was excellent. Live discussions and Q&As will be a staple to the course moving forward.

## Greening Schools Program

Horsford Nursery has donated 5 free trees to schools since the program had been cancelled this spring. Participating schools were: Mt Abraham, Shelburne Community School, Charlotte Central School, Vergennes Elementary, and Bridport Central School.

### **Forestry Education Programs**

- ourVTwoods.org: We continue to plug away at the development of the Heartwood podcast. COVID-19 has made it difficult to move this project forward. We have requested an extension on our grant from the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets that supports this project with a revised launch time frame of March 2021.
- Professional Webinar Series: The webinar library is up and running. 118 licensed foresters have created an account in the library in order to access webinars. The webinar library has provided over We worked with Tamarack Media to design and build an online archived webinar library to support licensed foresters with on-demand VT Forester Continuing Education Credits (CEUs). [It is live and can be viewed here.](#)
- Women Owning Woodlands VT:
  - Continue to support this partner initiative of VT UCF, Vermont Coverts, Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Woodlands Association, UVM Extension and Women's Agricultural Network.
  - We submitted a USFS LSR grant proposal focused on enhancing this network and the on-the-ground impacts it can have.
  - We supported a webinar in September for practitioners to engage with the WOW network.

### **Media/Communications:**

- Social Media: Continue to support our social media accounts. We have integrated the whole team in contributing and rotate leads every week.
- Newsletters: Bimonthly TREEmail; biweekly VolunTREEmail template has been updated and reduced frequency to once a month. First edition had higher open rate and click rate!
- Website: Continue to maintain and improve the site - [www.vtcommunitforestry.org](http://www.vtcommunitforestry.org).

Desired Future Condition 5: <i>Legal, Institutional, and Economic Framework</i>				
Vermont has a legal, institutional, and economic framework in place for forest conservation and sustainability.				
Strategies		H	M	L
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: 2020/2021 grant agreement has been executed.

US Forest Service: We submitted a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant proposal to support the Women Owning Woodlands Network through demonstration projects, trainings, mentorship, and enhancing communications.

Urban Forest Economic Study: VT is one of 11 state partners engaged in an economic impact study of urban forestry in the northeast region. A survey was sent to a random selection of key stakeholders in VT in August and we continue to hear updates about the responses as they come in.

### **Financial Assistance to Communities**

- 2020 Grants:
  - Caring for Canopy grants program and special Emerald Ash Borer Management grants are in process and most have opted for an automatic extension due to COVID-19. [See grant awardees here.](#)
  - EAB Management grant projects partners (East Montpelier, Northfield, Essex/Essex Junction) will be part of a suite of case studies about ash removal along rural roads; project participants have checked in regularly with UCF staff. East Montpelier has completed its project as of end of November and UCF staff visited the ash tree removal and tree planting sites to assess the full impact of the projects. UCF staff have participated in regular check-ins with the USFS and other participating states (Ohio and Indiana).
- 2021 Grants: Ash Tree Management Grants funding is coming from a special pot of USFS Forest Health & Resilience funding, for which UCF applied. Proposals were due on October 30<sup>th</sup>. We received 13 proposals requesting over \$132,000; the grants review committee met in early November and allocated ~\$55,000, funding 3 proposals in full and 4 partially. Grant awardees will be listed on our website and announced in the next edition of TREEmail.
- UCF staff are considering how to better tell our story through the projects funded and municipalities supported financially over the years. We have started a collection of past deliverables and are considering a map-based function on our website to host these. More to come!

### **Professional Development**

- Elise and Joanne attended the New England Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture virtual conference in October.
- Elise and Gwen attended the virtual Partners in Community Forestry Conference in November.
- Joanne attended the virtual Society of Municipal Arborists Conference in November.
- Ginger participated in Global Learning Partners Virtual Intentional Design for On-line Learning in October and November

### **Program Staffing**

- Maintaining weekly check-ins online.
- Staff met in October for a distanced in-person full day meeting to discuss our engagement in issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- All UCF staff are working from home for the foreseeable future.

### **Council**

- Staff and council members engaged in a planning activity in between the September and December quarterly meetings to advance our 5-year strategic action planning process. Each of the 5 Desired Future Conditions has been discussed and a slate of strategies will be proposed at our December meeting.
- The Leadership Committee met in November to discuss the December meeting.
- Council will continue to meet virtually for at least the next two quarterly Council meetings.