

Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program

Program Update

December 2019 – March 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: Planning is underway for 9 events in VT Town Forests in 2020. Scheduled and potential events so far include:
 - **Balancing Town Forest Stewardship and Recreation: Can We Have Trails and Songbird Habitat Too?** Saturday, February 22nd, 1-3pm, *Hinesburg Town Forest, Hinesburg*
 - **Community Forests Mean Business: Connecting Vermont Town Forests to Downtowns** Thursday, March 26th, 9am-2pm *Wright's Mountain Devils Den Town Forest, and Downtown, Bradford*
 - Winter Trails (rescheduled) (Hardwick or Craftsbury Outdoor Center)
 - Mountain Biking 101 (Marshfield) (May)
 - Town Forest EAB walks with County Foresters (May)
 - Trails Day (possibly around National Trails Day) at VYCC/Richmond June

- Bench Building Workshop (Newbury Town Forest (June or Sept)
- Community Governance Training (Sept)

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 December and March, we worked with West Windsor, Marshfield, Rockingham, Ludlow, Westminster, Grafton, Andover, Reading, Proctorsville, Bellows Falls, Springfield, Dummerston, Windham and Saxton's River to plan for EAB, train volunteers, or conduct an inventory. We also provided technical assistance over email to Vershire, Corinth, Ripton, Ferrisburgh, Charlotte, East Montpelier, and Barre City.
- EAB Planning: We continue to support towns statewide in planning for EAB. Between December and March, we directly worked with or provided guidance to Londonderry, Andover, and Wheelock on planning for the impacts of the pest. We also presented to municipal staff via Regional Planning Commissions; we ran a workshop in collaboration with the Southern Windsor Regional Road Foreman Meeting in December (6 towns represented) and one in collaboration with the Windham Regional Commission in January (14 towns represented).

Forest Planning

- Forest Integrity Project: This USFS funded project continues to move forward and we have requested and received a one-year extension so that the project can continue through August 2021. 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. Partners met in December to discuss project progress and how to spend down the remaining funds to meet project goals. Ideas in the hopper/we are exploring include:
 - Campaign or resources to support urban forest planning in town planning processes
 - More direct technical assistance to municipalities (through RPCs) to support integration of forest integrity language/Act 171 language in municipal plans
 - A survey out to municipalities to assess perceptions of and support for the wood products industry

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.
- Partnered with VT Invasive Plant Coordinator to produce 300 pocket guides to 12 common invasive plants (and lookalikes).

EAB Response & Planning

- Vermont Agency of Transportation has contracted with Bear Creek Environmental to develop an EAB management plan/strategy; UCF has been included in the planning process and will continue to advise through regular project meetings.
- Vermont utility companies continue to meet quarterly on EAB; GMP power has developed an app to collect information about ash tree removals and is charging a line item on its bills to fund EAB management. WEC is already removing ash trees along its transmission line ROWs. The utilities continue to share resources and information on EAB management in Vermont and nationwide.
- EAB brief for House Ag & Forestry Committee was developed by FPR staff to bring up the issue as a topic for discussion within the committee.
- UCF is working on a suite of case studies about how municipalities have and are managing for EAB, here in Vermont and beyond.

EAB Trailhead Project:

We are working with Vermont Forest, Parks, and Recreation on creating a poster that will be placed on high traffic trailheads in Vermont. The goal of this project is to educate hikers and other recreationists on how to identify ash trees and the signs and symptoms of EAB and to report suspect trees to VTinvasives.

EAB Awareness Week: May 16 - 23rd

- We will be putting out a call to communities to host Ash Tree Tagging events. The first seven towns to respond to the call will receive a free
 - “EAB Awareness Community Kit” including signs and tagging materials. Each of these seven towns will be profiled on social media on a different day of the week.
- County Foresters have been challenged to hold an ash or EAB awareness walk in every county during the month of May
- Based on the success of the Purple Trap program last year, we will host three Purple Trap trainings in town forests during EAB Awareness Week

EAB Outreach Events

- Dec 10th: Ludlow, EAB Training for Regional Road Foreman, Joanne Garton and Hannah Dallas
- Jan 9th: Londonderry Town Hall, Preparing for EAB, Ginger Nickerson, Judy Rosovsky and Pieter van Loon
- Jan 23rd: Weathersfield Town Hall, Preparing for EAB, Jim Esden
- Jan 29th: Newfane, EAB Preparedness and Management for Windham Co Communities, Joanne Garton and Elise Schadler
- Jan 31st: Essex, EAB Management Lab with UVM Sustainable Forest Management class, Elise Schadler and Joanne Garton
- Feb 8th, Rockingham, How to Conduct an Ash Tree Inventory for Your Town using Collector ArcGIS, Joanne Garton and Ginger Nickerson
- Feb 8th, Hinesburg Town Forest, Emerald Ash Borer and Forest Management at the Hinesburg Town Forest, Ethan Tapper and Elise Schadler
- Feb 12th, Essex, EAB Management Lab with Champlain College Sustainable Forest Management class, Elise Schadler
- Feb 13th, Burlington, EAB Update at Vermont Nursery & Landscape Association winter meeting, Elise Schadler

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:** Digital downloads are available on [VT UCF's website](#) alongside new video tutorials on the first 10 (of 11) sections of the guide. Watershed Consultants has been contracted to do targeted outreach presentations and distribute the guide:

- VLCT's Planning & Zoning Conference (October)
- Transportation Planning Initiative meeting (RPC Transportation Planners gathering; November)
- Watersheds United Vermont annual conference (December)
- Town Officers Education Conference (April)

- **Technical Assistance:** Work was finished in Essex Junction and Montpelier; this component of the project is complete!

○ **Rural Component:**

- **Assessments and Plans:** Plainfield is preparing to receive its Resilient ROW report and recommendations based on the 2019 ash inventory along priority roads in Plainfield. The town of Panton is the subject of the online Climate Adaptation and Resilience Planning course currently in progress -- Panton will receive recommendations on several action items for green stormwater infrastructure in March. A graphic designer is now engaged to layout text and images for the upcoming outreach booklet.

- **Technical Assistance:** East Montpelier is receiving ongoing technical assistance as they implement a pilot ash removal project in conjunction with the Resilient Roads committee formed as a result of this grant-funded project. Marshfield received roadside ash inventory training as recommended in their Resilient ROW action plan.

- Lake Champlain Forest Watershed Management Partnership: Hiring continues to be in progress. Last summer's hiring process was a failed search. The position was revised to be Extension Forestry Coordinator and 10% of FTE was added to provide forestry outreach and education. Second round interviews were held last week. 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 position.

Energy Saving Trees/Vermont Community Canopy:

- 2020: We have selected three new communities to work with this year; Brattleboro, Bradford, and Hardwick will each receive 100 free trees for residents; the free tree pick-up day will be in early June. The grant agreement with the Arbor Day Foundation to run the program again this year has been developed and executed.
- RGGI: Still waiting to hear any news on the proposal we submitted to the Public Service Board to request funds from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative to support the program in the future.

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:

- Arbor Day Conference: Planning for 2020 Conference is well under way! Keynote speaker will be Eve Frankel, The Nature Conservancy's communications director in Vermont. 12 workshops in four tracks will follow.
- 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!* Contest winners will be featured on UVM Extension's Across the Fence on May 1 .
- Tree City/Tree Campus/Tree Line USA: Applications for the Arbor Day Foundation's recognition programs were due in February; UCF reviews and approves all of these. This year the Arbor Day Foundation debuted a new online application system, so there were some bumps but overall we're pleased with the new system.
- New Recognition Programs: Tree Campus k-12 and Tree Campus Healthcare have been introduced by the Arbor Day Foundation; UCF is helping to promote.
- Greening Schools on Arbor Day: Horsford Gardens & Nursery will once again donate up to 10 trees to schools in Chittenden and Addison counties. A mailing went out to all principals in both counties, and UCF will follow up with social media and e-mail. The deadline for applications is April 1.

Tree Wardens:

- Tree Warden Statute Amendments: Amendments were revisited ahead of the 2020 legislative session were introduced as bill H.673 to the House Ag & Forestry Committee on January 14th. There has been considerable buzz about the bill (both negative and positive) and several days of testimony. FPR staff, including UCF, has consulted with concerned stakeholders across the board to understand concerns and introduced an amended bill in late February.
- While UCF staff has not been present at any of the House Ag & Forestry Committee hearings (Commissioner Snyder, Deputy Commissioner Lincoln, and Director Fitzko have taken the lead), we have presented on and defended the new language in the bill at a Transportation Advisory Committee meeting coordinated by the Lamoille Regional Planning Commission on February 26th.

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 have scheduled a meeting in March with ANR IT and web team staff to discuss modernizing the database.

- We hope to enlist County Foresters and trained consulting foresters in an effort re-measure champions starting this spring.

Forest Pest First Detectors:

- Hosted a Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Monitoring Workshop in Bristol with Jim Esden of FPR, and Caitlin Cusack of Vermont Land Trust (Esden is interested in identifying habitats where hemlock may do well under climate change).
- Planning a “Basic FPDF” training the NEK for April, an Oak Wilt walk and talk at Savannah Ferreira’s site, purple trap trainings, and another regional “Conducting Ash Inventory Workshop” and suspect tree training in the NEK in June.

Forestry Education Programs

- Teens Reaching Youth (TRY) - Forests and Trees: Training was held for the 4 teams of teen student teachers on December 5; we’ve done site visits to Williamstown, Williston, and Richmond. One highlight from site visits: A student teacher in Williamstown completely mastered the content of the tree identification lesson he was teaching. He described a lobed leaf to one of the third graders as a “leaf that looked like someone took a bite out of it”. It was a clear indication that the teen teacher had practiced and knew how to make the content his own!
- ourVTwoods.org: Planning for the 5-part podcast is underway! Partner storyboarding meeting was held in 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: Planning is underway for 2020 webinars and building out the webinar archived library. Topics planned include Tick Borne Diseases, Silvopasturing,
- 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. Survey is out http://middlebury.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_23NmIIA9IMaRI33. We are planning on a June WOW Summit.

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 continue.
- Website: Continue to maintain and improve the site - www.vtcommunitforestry.org. Our website developer, Tamarack Media, joined us for our March quarterly staff meeting to discuss current needs/issues and a substantial upgrade to a new web platform that we’ll need to prioritize (and budget for!) in a few years.

Volunteer Support

Students and Educators:

- A project we proposed to Antioch University’s environmental graduate program for spring 2020 was unfortunately not selected.
- UCF staff presented to three UVM classes and one Champlain College class in January and February.

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		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: 2019/2020 grant agreement has finally been signed and finalized!

US Forest Service:

- Completed and submitted annual reporting to USFS and on active USFS LSR grants.
- Serving as co-chair of urban forestry assessment committee and serving as a liaison for technology transfer.
- We submitted a US Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) grant proposal focused on rural roadside forest management and town capacity but it was not selected for funding.
- We submitted a US Forest Service **Urban Forest Health & Resilience** grant proposal in February and are waiting to hear if it will be funded.

Vermont Nursery & Landscape Association:

- Serving a two-year term on the board of the VNLA.
- Participated in one board meeting and presented at the VLNA winter meeting.
- Helped to design and co-facilitate a strategic planning effort for the association; follow-up document was produced.

Financial Assistance to Communities

- **2019 Grants:** As needed, supporting 20 communities currently working on their EAB Planning Grant projects. Grants will close out in late March; 6 have been extended after formal requests were submitted.
- **2020 Grants:** Proposals for our Caring for Canopy grants program and special Emerald Ash Borer Management grants program were due in mid-January. We received requests for over \$51,000 in the Caring for Canopy grants program (with \$25,000 to allocate) and \$60,000 in the EAB Management program (with \$45,000), making it the most competitive grant round we've had in recent years. The grants review committee selected 11 proposals to fund in the Caring for Canopy program and 3 proposals to fund in the EAB Management program. Grant agreement development is in process.

Program Staffing

- Maintaining weekly check-ins and quarterly face-to-face planning meetings.
- Joanne Garton and Gwen Kozlowski are participating in an online ***Climate Adaptation Planning course*** provided by Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science. They are using the rural roadsides of Panton to create a management plan that incorporates expected effects of climate change in the region.
- Gwen will be attending Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals Conference (ANREP) in Bend, Or in May. She will be presenting on the Backyard Woods Program.
- Kate Forrer started her second semester in UVM's EdD program using our work in community forestry to explore issues of social justice, inequity and leadership.
- Elise Schadler is preparing for maternity leave; she will be out entirely April – June, back one day/week in July, and will continue to work part-time through August.

Council

- New Council Leadership Committee began their terms: Cecilia Danks and Richard Amore will remain for another term and Bonnie Waninger and Melissa Levy are joining the Committee
- Council feedback was appreciated and incorporated into an opinion piece/letter about the tree warden statute amendments; this has not yet been distributed.