

VT Urban & Community Forestry Program Quarterly Report
December 2021 – March 2022

Desired Future Condition 1: Biological Diversity		
Conserve biological diversity across all landscapes.		
Strategies		Priorities
1.1	Promote sustainable planning, use, and management of public greenspaces in villages and downtowns, such as village greens, town forests, parks, trails, playgrounds, and other public gathering spaces.	✓
1.2	Increase awareness, support, and implementation of planning for urban and community forests at local, regional, and statewide scales.	✓
1.3	Encourage long-term conservation efforts such as acquisition and planning by partners to keep forests forested and address forest fragmentation.	
1.4	Promote biological diversity and resiliency in urban and community forests through planning, use, and management that sustain diverse forest types and tree species, conditions, and age.	

Forest Planning

- **Forest Integrity Project:** This USFS Landscape Restoration Grant project continues to move forward with an end date of 6/30/22. 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:
 - VNRC's contract concluded.
 - Vermont League of Cities and Towns contract concluded.
 - CVRPC continues to work with municipalities and other RPCs to assist in incorporating Act 171 Forest Integrity language into town and regional plans; they will begin an update to their own regional plan, which will be used as a case study for the larger project.
 - The final component of the project is a **communications project** to develop a suite of short videos to communicate planning requirements under Act 171 and the tools that have been developed to support municipalities. We selected Peregrine Productions LLC (Vince Franke) as the contractor and had a project kickoff meeting to begin to plan the video series.

Vermont Tree Selection Guide and Tool

Last summer Joanne and Elise met with Bob Popp, a Biologist with VT Fish & Wildlife, to discuss edits to our VT Tree Selection Guide and VT Tree Selection Tool. The discussion focused on specific species that are on the state's rare, threatened, or endangered plant list, as well as those that might be potentially invasive if planted outside of a "horticultural setting". Updates this quarter:

- We compiled the proposed edits from Bill Jewel, Tim Parsons, and David Raphael and those from John Padua (Cobble Creek Nursery) and Charlie Plonski (New England Nursery Sales) into a final draft document.
- We circulated the final draft document within FPR for review, specifically with our Invasive Plants team; this spurred a long discussion about *Syringa reticulata* (Japanese tree lilac). Ultimately, we decided to remove it from the tree list.
- With David Raphael's passing, we decided to dedicate the revised edition in his memory. We'll be working with ASLA to do a reprint of the guide.
- Gwen has begun the process of updating the InDesign document and Elise is working on details for the 13 new species we are adding to the list.

State House Forest Management Plan

Joanne and FPR Watershed Forester Dave Wilcox continue to work with the Vermont Department of Buildings and General Services to create a management plan for the ~14 acre forested parcel of land behind the Vermont State House. The City of Montpelier remains an important partner in the stewardship of this highly visible and visited site. The decline of stands of planted red and Scotch pine and the imminent impact of emerald ash borer on the forest's many ash trees is challenging the State and City to manage the parcel in new ways for aesthetic, cultural, recreational, and economic purposes.

Desired Future Condition 2: Forest Health & Productivity		
Maintain and enhance forest ecosystem health and productivity.		
Strategies		Priorities
2.1	Identify, facilitate, and/or transfer research by academic, government, or community-led science initiatives that improves our understanding of urban and community forests, including urban forest inventory and analysis (Urban FIA).	
2.2	Survey, monitor, and support slow the spread and prevention efforts of invasive species that impact urban and community forests.	
2.3	Expand resources to assist communities to prepare for, mitigate, and recover from threats to urban and community forests including severe weather, fragmentation, climate change, and invasive pests.	✓
2.4	Increase communities' capacity to create resilient urban and community forests through growing or acquiring high-quality trees and a diversity of species.	
2.5	Encourage landscape level planning and management activities that maintain health, productivity, and ecological functions of urban and community forests in light of climate change.	
2.6	Conduct technical assistance to communities, including volunteer groups, in order to help them understand, evaluate, and/or implement actions to advance sustainable urban and community forestry programs.	✓

Municipal Technical Assistance

- Ash Inventory and EAB Planning: UCF continues to support municipalities performing ash inventories and monitoring the health of public and private ash. Between December 2021 and March 2022, the towns of Charlotte and Vernon received assistance on inventory methodology and data management.
- Public Tree Inventory: Our public tree inventory tool was first launched back in 2014; we are currently working with ANR IT to modernize the tool, add new fields, and integrate with ArcGIS Field Maps (Collector is sunsetting). This quarter we assisted the towns of Mount Holly and Charlotte with inventory of their public village/street trees using our existing Public Tree Inventory tool. Additionally, we continue to provide technical assistance to Brattleboro regarding the use of their 2015 public tree inventory to guide future planning for the urban forest.

Resilient Urban Forests for All

VT UCF received special funding from the USFS to design a new [Resilient Urban Forests for All Assistance Package](#) is to support and grow downtown trees and forests in Vermont's most populated areas in partnership with communities that lack capacity and need assistance to advance their urban forestry programs. We received four applications for the project and selected The **Town of Windsor** and the **Village of Lyndonville** as the pilot partner communities. Joanne has begun to work with these towns to plan for the year ahead; these municipalities will receive a package valued at over \$20,000 that includes funding for strategic planting or tree maintenance, inventory work by a UCF intern, tree care supplies and resources, and trainings for staff and citizens.

Urban Forest Health Outreach and Education: VTinvasives website

- Continued to improve the structure of EAB information, including improvements to the EAB map, on VTinvasives.
- [VTinvasives E-News](#): 1 produced.
- Continued to support 'Report It' submissions.

EAB Response & Planning

- Last year UCF released a suite of [case studies](#) about how municipalities have and are managing for EAB here in Vermont and beyond; we are in the process of developing additional case studies for current EAB-related grant recipients; this quarter **Waterbury's** case study was completed, Richmond's case study was drafted, and slowly work began on Middlebury and Essex's case studies.
- As part of the two special USFS State Urban Forest Resilience grants we received (2020 & 2021) to increase financial support to municipalities in the face of EAB, we will be coordinating a couple of hands-on training for tree warden, municipal staff, and arborists this spring and summer.
- Elise and Joanne joined FPR Forest Health and State Lands staff in February to visit the LR Jones State Forest in Plainfield. The site is heavily infested with EAB and is home to one of the state's two EAB biocontrol sites. Joanne will be writing an article about the site visit and about biocontrol for EAB in VT.
- **Black Ash Field Naturalist Project:** UVM Graduate Student Charlotte Cadow has launched into the many facets of a Vermont-based community science data collection project focused on the current location of black ash, the expected ecological impact of the loss of black

ash due to EAB, the cultural implications of the loss of black ash for the Abenaki people, and the logistical challenges surrounding preservation of black ash trees for future study.

Pest Outreach

- The Forest Pest Outreach Program (FPOP) had been primarily focused since 2018 on EAB and hemlock woolly adelgid. This year the program has started to broaden its education and outreach to include both other invasive pests that are likely to be established in Vermont soon, such as spotted lanternfly and common vectors, such as moving firewood. Highlights this quarter:
 - Ginger is partnering with Kate Forrer and Lisa Sausville to produce two episodes for their podcast series, [Heartwood](#).
 - the cultural and ecological significance of black ash in the face of emerald ash borer
 - the benefits of diverse tree plantings in urban settings
 - Three webinars were held in January:
 - Jumping Worms (Josef Gorres) (**176** attendees)
 - Status of hemlock woolly adelgid and elongate hemlock scale in Vermont and the potential effects of climate change (Jim Esden and Savannah Ferreira) (**68** attendees)
 - Ecological, silvicultural, and cultural consideration for ash preservation in northern forests (Tony D'Amato) (**236** attendees)

Desired Future Condition 3: Forest Products & Ecosystem Services		
Maintain and enhance forest contribution to ecosystem services.		
Strategies		Priorities
3.1	Facilitate opportunities to utilize urban wood including after natural disasters or pest infestations.	
3.2	Identify and facilitate opportunities to integrate local agroforestry into urban and community forestry in public spaces.	
3.3.	Promote awareness and use of urban and community forestry practices to protect water quality in rural and urban Vermont landscapes through implementation of low impact development (LID), green stormwater infrastructure (GSI), and sound silvicultural practices that support resilient community trees and forests.	

3.4	Promote awareness and use of urban and community forestry practices at the municipal level to adapt climate change strategies that mitigate urban air temperatures, water and air pollution, and support biodiversity.	✓
3.5	Monitor and explore opportunities for forest carbon credits for urban and community forestry in Vermont.	
3.6	Promote awareness and stewardship around the ecosystem services of community forests and other public spaces.	
3.7	Fund, promote, and record progress on implementation of best practices and outreach initiatives that support functional ecosystems at local and regional scales.	✓
3.8	Facilitate impact mitigation of invasive forest pests at regional and statewide levels and the associated ecosystem services and cultural losses resulting from infestations and the decline of specific impacted tree populations.	

Energy Saving Trees/Vermont Community Canopy

- Spring 2022: Gwen is planning for the next round of the VCC program. We'll be working with Burlington, Rutland, and Montpelier and will focus on reaching underserved audiences by launching the programs in partnership with specific local organizations.
- Funding: We have one more year of funding to run the spring 2022 program through an air quality settlement fund via the Air Quality Division at the Department of Environmental Conservation. We have funding to run a fall 2022 program in the two selected Resilient Urban Forests for All partner municipalities (see DFC #2 above). The Governor's proposed budget includes \$1 million for UCF for tree planting in cities, which would allow us to expand this program substantially in the coming years. This week, the Department of Health also reached out with some potential funding for the program (more to come!).

Green Stormwater Infrastructure

- Lake Champlain Sea Grant has hired a new Green Infrastructure Coordinator, Jill Sarazen, and the once-active but long-time-dormant Green Infrastructure Collaborative had a meeting in January. The group includes public and private sector professionals and will be reviving statewide green infrastructure coordination planning this spring.

Desired Future Condition 4: Land Ethic		
Maintain and enhance an ethic of respect for the land, sustainable use, and exemplary management.		
Strategies		Priorities
4.1	Create awareness and foster recognition of the ecological, social, cultural, and economic contributions that urban and community forests provide to Vermont, and the need to sustain forest health and productivity to ensure continued benefits for this and future generations.	✓
4.2	Maintain and expand public outreach, social media, and technology transfer.	
4.3	Educate and engage the public, including students, in urban and community forest stewardship and community science, including Vermont Tree Stewards and Forest Pest First Detectors.	
4.4	Educate landowners, tree wardens, forestry professionals, professional arborists, municipal staff, and land managers on the benefits of urban and community forest stewardship.	✓
4.5	Promote the implementation and demonstration of sustainable forest management on private and public lands, including town forests.	
4.6	Promote urban and community forests as an opportunity to respond to the COVID 19 global pandemic and help Vermont communities restore civic life, build social connections, spark economic vitality, and improve environmental sustainability.	✓
4.7	Support volunteer groups, particularly municipal tree committees, conservation commissions, and town forest committees, in issues of community governance and leadership.	

Arbor Day

- Considering the slow return to pre-pandemic events and activities, we have decided to modify our in-person Arbor Day Conference this year. Instead of a one-day event, we'll be coordinating four separate field days through the month of May to align with the four different conference tracks. Planning has begun and we'll be looking for Council's input on locations and content for the days.
- The Growing Works of Art Contest (grades k-8) is open and accepting submissions until March 11th. This year's theme is *Share your Tree-mendous story*.
- We are again working with Horfords Nursery to run the Greening Schools on Arbor Day Program to offer a free tree to schools in Chittenden and Addison counties.

- After a successful pilot year, we'll again be working with the Vermont Department of Libraries to offer Arbor Day Celebration kits to 66 libraries statewide. The kits will include scavenger hunts, tree ID handouts, craft ideas, tree benefits activity and sugar maple grow kits!

Recognition Programs:

- We are accepting nominations for our **Tree Steward Awards** through March 31st. There are four categories, and we will also award our annual Arbor Day Award (staff pick) to David Raphael.
- **Tree City, Tree Campus Higher Education, and Tree Line USA** applications for the 2021 year were due in February; Elise has reviewed them all and passed them on to the Arbor Day Foundation for review. Of note is St. Michael's College as a new applicant.

Vermont Big Tree Program

- Thanks to Gwen, we have officially launched the revamped, reinvigorated Vermont Big Trees Program! The old Big Trees database was out of date and most of the existing 145 State champion trees on the list had not been remeasured in at least a decade. Many of the records lack accurate location information and/or contact information for the landowner or original submission contact. Last summer, Gwen and a variety of co-measurers revisited and remeasured trees using an ArcGIS Survey 123 form to log the location and information on the trees. Based on ability to locate the trees, contact landowners, etc., there are now just over 50 trees remeasured and on the updated list and about 70 vacant tree species to fill. Check out the [new map and list](#)!

Forest Pest First Detectors

- Reorganization of materials on our website to create on-line toolkit: Currently materials related to community engagement and working with municipalities on pest preparedness are in several different locations on two of our websites and are a little difficult to locate for someone not familiar with the sites. As part of our website reorganization, we will be placing these materials in one location for Forest Pest First Detectors to use and share with other volunteers.
- The spring 2022 online Forest Pest First Detector training focusing on invasive forest insects and birds has launched and will run for 8 weeks in February - April. One hundred and thirteen people are participating in the training! We are partnering with Audubon Vermont, the VT Center for Ecostudies, and Vermont Fish and Wildlife on the course. In addition to the on-line component, course participants will have the opportunity to participate in live webinars by VT Audubon and other organizations, and there will be three field trips where participants can have first-hand practice with host tree identification and looking at signs and symptoms of infestations (EAB in the Islands;

HWA in southern VT; and a visit to the Audubon forest to discuss the relationship between forest management decisions, forest health and resilience, invasive species and birds). The field trips will be co-led by Forest Health staff from FPR.

Backyard Woods Course

- 2022 Course: Planing for a fall course and Gwen is creating a “short course” that will be available anytime.

Forestry Education Programs

- Professional Webinar Library: We continue to maintain an on-demand forestry webinar library for VT licensed foresters to get free CEUs.
- Elise presented two lectures to UVM’s Restoration Ecology course in January; the lectures focused on urban forestry and restoration of urban ecosystems.
- ourVTwoods.org Upgrade: Planning is underway for improvements to ourVTwoods.org. In January, UCF’s Kate Forrer facilitated a stakeholder convening to better understand and prioritize partner needs. Building the website audience was identified as the top priority moving forward. Kate is working with a website strategist to explore options for moving forward.
- Women Owning Woodlands (WOW) VT: We continue to support this partner initiative of VT UCF, Vermont Coverts, Vermont Land Trust, the Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation, Vermont Woodlands Association, UVM Extension, and the Women’s Agricultural Network.
 - The WOW project funded by the USFS Landscape Scale Restoration grant is moving forward; we are in the process of getting grant agreements in place for Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Woodlands Association, and Vermont Coverts.
 - WOW educational programs are ramping up, including:
 - hosting a tree identification webinar and 4 tree id learning circles in February and March.
 - hosting a timber harvest learning circle for March 19th in the Hinesburg Town Forest with Ethan Tapper.
 - Planning is underway for the implementation of 10 forestry demonstration projects, in partnership with VYCC.

Town Forests Stewardship Demonstration and Leadership Training

FPR, UVM Extension, and the Vermont Land Trust continue to work on the USFS Landscape Scale Restoration project, ***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. Highlights this quarter include:

- Forester Facilitation Training: Planning is underway for a winter webinar series to address some of the common challenges facing professionals in town forest planning; potential topics include virtual community engagement and navigating conflicts in community planning.
- Community Leadership Training and Toolkit: Convening a group of professionals across UVM Extension, FPR, Vermont Land Trust, and the Northern Forest Center to meet regularly to discuss and design the curriculum.
- Demonstration Project Library: Planning is underway for the creation of the community forestry demonstration library to provide access for private landowners to visit places where forest management has been happening. ANR will be building the library with the long term goal of integrating demonstration sites into the Natural Resource Atlas.

Media/Communications:

- Social Media: Continue to support our social media account (Facebook); the team rotates posting responsibilities.
- Newsletters: Bimonthly TREEmail; monthly VolunTREEmail.
- Website: Continue to maintain and improve the site - www.vtcommunityforestry.org. We are well into the “discovery” process for our website rebuild and the contract to rebuild with Tamarack Media will be developed soon so the project can move forward this coming winter/spring. The site will have a new look and a revamped architecture (organization).

Desired Future Condition 5: Legal, Institutional, & Economic Framework		
Vermont has a legal, institutional, and economic framework in place for forest conservation and sustainability.		
Strategies		Priorities
5.1	Sustain and expand funding opportunities to support local, state, and regional efforts for urban and community forest stewardship, health, and sustainability.	✓
5.2	Educate state leadership, including legislatures, secretaries, commissioners, and division/departments directors of programming efforts, opportunities, and challenges.	
5.3	Educate communities, volunteers, and residents about urban and community forest policies, governance models, rules, and laws including Vermont’s Tree Warden statutes.	✓

5.4	Advocate for policies, programs, and initiatives that assist in urban and community forest stewardship, health, and sustainability.	
5.5	Strive to strategically identify emerging issues and meet immediate challenges and establish an appropriate level of infrastructure and staffing.	
5.6	Foster strategic partnerships to deliver innovative urban and community forestry programming and support organizational capacity.	✓
5.7	Promote and cultivate cross-program and cross-agency cooperation and communication, within Vermont as well as with regional and national partners, to improve efficiency and effectiveness.	
5.8	Maintain and develop data management systems, ensure indicators are appropriate to monitor progress, and share data among partners to enhance internal and external communications and collaborations.	
5.9	Support professional development, continued learning, and succession planning for program staff.	
5.10	Foster an organizational culture within the program that rewards excellence, celebrates accomplishments, encourages teamwork, and recognizes achievements.	
5.11	Increase access to the benefits of trees and urban and community forests for all Vermonters by applying a lens of environmental justice, equity, diversity, and inclusivity across programming.	✓

2022 Legislative Session

- We are currently monitoring **S.190**, an act related to tree replanting in the State highway ROW and Agency of Transportation landscaping and streetscaping. Testimony from three AOT staff was heard in mid-February and it does not seem that the bill will move forward, though we're hoping to use it as impetus to work with AOT to clarify the procedures and ways that municipalities can planting trees with the state ROW.
- The Governor's proposed budget includes **\$1 million for UCF** to plant 5,000 trees in urban areas to support Vermont's Climate Action Plan. We are, obviously, very eager to see if it goes through and rumblings are that it would potentially include a limited service, part time position for our program.

Tree Wardens

- **Tree Warden Reporting Button:** We sent out a reminder to town clerks in municipalities that have not yet certified the appointment of a tree warden (a requirement in the updated statutes); we now have about 150 towns in the database.
- **Shade Tree Preservation Plans:** As part of the guidance UCF is providing related to the amended tree warden statutes, we are working with 10 selected municipalities over 13 months to draft municipal shade tree preservation plans. The components and goals of the plans are outlined in the statutes, but we are working with each community individually to develop a suite of templates for communities of varied size, population, and land use. The program supports East Montpelier, Monkton, St. Albans, Charlotte, Hartford, Johnson, Middlebury, Mount Holly, Shrewsbury, and West Windsor until March of 2022. Unofficially, we're also working with the Town of Shelburne and the Town of Brattleboro to update their comprehensive urban forest management plan and include required components of a shade tree preservation plan and have met with volunteers in the Town of Calais regarding their plan. In this quarter, Joanne assisted Mount Holly, West Windsor, Hartford, East Montpelier, St. Albans, Charlotte, Johnson, Middlebury, and Brattleboro.

Financial Assistance to Communities

- **2022 Grants:**
 - **Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer Grants:** This special grant opportunity, thanks to a USFS grant, will allow UCF to continue to support tree plantings to replace removed ash in our most populated areas. Thanks to Ann and Bonnie for sitting on the grants review committee; we are funding 7 projects for a total of just over \$60,000. [More information here.](#)
 - **Vermont Community Garden Network subaward:** We awarded the Vermont Garden Network \$20,000 to run a grant program for their network to plant fruit and nut trees at community garden sites statewide. Nearly 40 applications were received and Gwen and Elise are on the grant review committee.
 - **Caring for Canopy Grants:** 10 municipalities were selected to receive funding to support their projects. [Learn more here.](#)
- UCF staff are considering how to better tell our story through the projects funded and municipalities supported financially over the years. We are starting to add these to our website and are making some alterations to our [Community Map](#) to be able to show the impact of UCF's funding statewide.

Financial and Programming Partnerships

UVM Extension: Our 2021/2022 grant agreement to support our UCF staff at Extension has been executed and is supporting Gwen, Kate, and Ginger's UCF-related work.

US Forest Service:

- We have just received confirmation that the \$50,000 bump in our UCF core funding that we received for FY '21 will be renewed for FY '22.
- Elise is serving on the Northeast Midwest State Foresters Alliance (NMSFA) Trees & Public Health Committee.

Urban Forest Economic Study: VT is one of 11 state partners engaged in an economic impact study of urban forestry in the northeast region. The full report and Vermont's state-specific report have been reviewed and should be released soon.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity (JEDI) work

- Our staff has finalized our external-facing statement regarding justice, equity, diversity, and inclusivity in VT UCF, addressing the work that the team is undertaking to advance JEDI initiatives at personal and programmatic levels. We are eager to share the statement and it is currently being reviewed by the ANR Central Office. Once approved, this will live on our website.
- The group also updated measurable goals for the program to approach over the short- and long-term. This quarter we have engaged in a team process to develop a logic model to help us track our work around JEDI issues, and to hold ourselves accountable to the goals and objectives we have identified as priorities.

Professional Development

- Kate continues her EdD program at UVM this spring, remotely.
- Joanne passed her ISA Certified Arborist exam in December and is now officially an ISA Certified Arborist!

Program Staffing

- Maintaining weekly check-ins online.
- Our March quarterly staff meeting was held virtually. We focused on the website rebuild, group learning, and initiatives in the year ahead.

- All UCF staff continue to work primarily from home.
- We are still waiting on applications from UVM Rubenstein School perennial internship candidates to help us with several summer initiatives.
- We have matched with a UVM Field Naturalist graduate student to work on a black ash-focused project for the coming year. See more under DCF 2 above.

Council

- We are still seeking 2 members to sit on the leadership team.
- There are currently 2 vacancies on Council: the FPR seat and ASLA seat are open, and we hope to fill these by the June meeting.