

VT Urban & Community Forestry Program Quarterly Report
September – December 2023

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.	

Town Forests

- Community Forests as Models for Stewardship Landscape Scale Restoration Project: Keith Thompson (Private Lands, FPR) continues to lead this project, which includes plans to develop a community forest volunteer leadership training curriculum. This would follow the general online format of the Town Forest Recreation Planning toolkit. While this portion of the project was originally intended to be contracted out to UVM Extension, we are now planning to take it on as a UCF project: Joanne will be working on this over the winter months and will have updates to share at the March Council meeting.
- Town Forest Census: Cecilia Danks and graduate student Julie Frost are well underway with work on the Town Forest Census (NRCS-funded); UCF, as well as a good number of others on Council, are engaged as advisory committee members. Cecilia will present an update on the project at our December Council meeting.

Environmental Leadership

The VT Dept. of Fish & Wildlife's Community Wildlife Program coordinates and runs an Environmental Leadership Program (formerly Natural Resources 1 & 2). The program focuses on Conservation Commission members and municipal staff. This fall for the first time, UCF's Joanne Garton co-coordinated and taught the online curriculum. The three-class Session #1 served 14 participants and the current three-class Session #2 is serving 12 participants. Represented towns were Brandon, Brattleboro, Burlington, Charlotte, Cornwall, Georgia, Hartford, Hinesbury, New Haven, Richmond, Shrewsbury, Springfield, Underhill, and West Fairlee. Joanne also presented two virtual workshops on roadside vegetation management (Resilient Right-of-Ways) through the Community Wildlife Program's fall webinar series for participants from Barre City, Brandon, Charlotte, Craftsbury, East Montpelier, Guilford, Jericho, Plainfield, Putney, Shrewsbury, and Warren.

Engaging with the Nursery Industry regarding tree availability and sourcing

UCF staff Elise, Adam, Joanne, and Gwen visited Cobble Creek Nursery in Lincoln in November to continue to discuss and consider piloting a program within UCF to support bareroot tree plantings in smaller communities. More to come on this as our team plans for 2024/2025.

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 September and December 2023, the Braintree, Shelburne, Stowe, and Vergennes received assistance with inventory methodology and data management.
- Public Tree Inventory: Our public tree inventory tool was first launched back in 2014; we have now modernized the tool, added new fields, and integrated with ArcGIS Field Maps and Survey 123 to replace the outgoing Collector app. This quarter we assisted the towns of Colchester, Shelburne, Vergennes with their inventory of trees in public ways and places using our existing Public Tree Inventory tool.
- Ordinances and Policies: VT UCF continues to support shade tree preservation plan development, tree ordinance and tree policy review. Between September and December 2023, the towns of South Burlington, Brandon, and Charlotte received technical assistance regarding policy and ordinance updates.
- Municipal Training: No municipal trainings were offered this quarter; we will consider and discuss 2024 trainings at our upcoming staff quarterly meeting as we plan out the year ahead.
- Assisting Communities: This fall, we visited Vergennes, St. Johnsbury, Johnson, Cabot, and Newport, to assess their needs for increasing canopy going forward, and opportunities for utilizing grants, and to encourage new approaches to urban tree care including structural soils and green streets.

Mapping & Vermont's Urban Forests

- The last time we ran an analysis on statewide urban tree canopy coverage was in 2012. This spring and summer we have been working with the ANR GIS team to update the map. After considerable back and forth, we're close to a final map: using E911 data to define densely populated areas in the state, the map shows tree canopy coverage within the "Urban Landscape Zone" at the census block layer level. We hope to use this map to better inform priority areas for technical assistance, funding allocation, and prioritization of planting areas and funding. The draft map is [available here](#) (username: FPRPartner, password: WOrktogether) and we will be finalizing this map in collaboration with Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission as we prepare to launch the Urban Tree Planting Project and grant program spring 2024.

Urban Forest Health Outreach and Education: VTinvasives website

- VTinvasives E-News: 1 produced.
- Continued to support 'Report It' submissions. The first Vermont detections of the following species were all submitted through VTinvasives this summer/fall: pale swallowwort, mile-a-minute weed, elm zig zag sawfly, and beech leaf disease.

EAB Response & Planning

- UCF received funding in 2022 from the USFS for a *Sustainable Urban Forests Resilience* project. Part of this project will involve strategic planning for EAB in Vermont and outreach to communities and organizations in the southern half of Vermont. Highlights this quarter include:
 - Our new Urban Forester, Adam McCullough, will be taking over the technical assistance and plan development side of this project. He has also (somewhat jokingly) changed the acronym of the project from SUFR to PEP (Partners in EAB Planning).
 - The UCF team continued to identify potential partners and refine the list of (at least 6) organizations or municipalities that will be receiving direct technical assistance with ash management/EAB planning. Specific updates:
 - Addison County Community Trust/Mobile Home Park: Draft plan as written by UCF has been ACCEPTED and initial steps are underway.
 - City of Vergennes: Multiple discussions and visits have led to the forming of a tree group including volunteers and town officials with a steadily increasing understanding of EAB management. They are drafting a grant application, and looking to increase their in-house capability for tree work. A draft for their EAB management plan can be expected soon.
 - Village of Bellows Falls/Rockingham: The green ash population of Bellows Falls is concentrated in one small area. They have agreed to partner with UCF to make a plan. Next up is a site visit scheduled for Dec 14th.
 - Town of Brattleboro: Brattleboro has agreed to partner with UCF to write an EAB plan. They are in a great position to leap forward. The next step is a site visit that has yet to be scheduled.
 - Town of Fair Haven: They are using local students to assess their ash population before deciding whether or not to make an EAB plan. Google Street View explorations have not shown that their need is very great.
 - We will continue to explore potential partners for this project and hope to have several of the EAB plans completed by next quarter.
- **Black Ash**: UCF continues to focus on 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. Highlights this quarter include:

- The UCF program staff continue to learn about black ash tree treatment, seed saving, monitoring, and breeding through a series of webinars hosted by the University of Maine [Ash Protection Collaborative Across Wabanakik](#).
 - Joanne Garton began work with Alnobaiwi, an Indigenous Arts organization, to discuss black ash splint storage in the Ethan Allen Homestead and Museum.
 - Joanne and Adam visited black ash forested wetlands in Grand Isle and Franklin counties to discuss ash insecticide treatment options on State-owned land.
 - Joanne worked with FPR forester Chloe Sardonis to harvest one black ash tree previously set up as a trap tree in Washington, VT. The tree was peeled to look for EAB, then delivered to Diane Stevens who is completing a 3-D scanning program documenting objects related to Abenaki artistic and cultural heritage.
 - The UCF program pitched a second field naturalist project to the UVM Field Naturalist program regarding black ash seed saving. We have not yet heard if a student is interested in the work.
- Program staff continue to notify town clerks and town managers/administrators when EAB has been confirmed for the first time in a municipality. This process corresponds with the uploading of updated Infested Area maps onto [vtInvasives.org](#). This quarter emails went out to the towns of Woodstock, Franklin, Washington, Cavendish and Ludlow.

Pest Outreach

- The Forest Pest Outreach Program (FPOP), had been primarily focused since 2018 on EAB and hemlock wooly adelgid. The program has more recently broadened its education and outreach to include other invasive pests, such as jumping worms, and ones that are likely to be established in Vermont soon, such as beech leaf disease and spotted lanternfly and common vectors, such as moving firewood. [Would it make sense to explain that: Because the funding for the Forest Pest Outreach Program is funded through the USDA Agricultural and Plant Health Inspection Service, [o]ur Forest Pest Education Coordinator, Ginger Nickerson, has been focusing programming efforts on spotted lanternfly (SLF), a Federal high-priority pest and an invasive leaf hopper which is rapidly moving north, and general vectors for forest pests, such as firewood. Highlights this quarter include:
 - Designed and distributing 600 Don't Move Firewood posters ([200 ea of three different versions](#)) and 500 spotted lanternfly posters and 500 visitor checklists at State Parks and Visitor Centers, through FPR and VAAFM; and to Conservation Commissions and convenience stores through the FPDFs network

- Designed and distributed 500 [spotted lanternfly posters](#) and 4,000 [worker](#) and [visitor](#) checklists to select nurseries, landscapers, and vineyards in “hot zones” (highly traveled areas near railroad corridors and rail trails)
- Interviewed State, County, and Extension personnel in PA, CT and MA about their experience, lessons learned, and advice about SLF; writing white paper to share with VAAFM and FPR
- Distributed SLF traps and educational materials to 10 vineyards in “hot zones” who have high number of visitors from states already infested with SLF
- Wrote FPOP grant proposal for 2024-25. Specific efforts in FY 24 will focus on emerging pest threats, including spotted lanternfly and European cherry fruit fly, as well as continuing to raise awareness of Asian longhorned beetle and other species of concern for Vermont. We will:
 - Revise and tailor our on-line Forest Pest First Detector curricula for Master Gardeners
 - Develop and market an interactive game for 8- to 12-year-olds and their families on how to identify, report and slow the spread of key pests.
 - Launch two educational campaigns targeting outdoor recreationists: one targeting hikers, anglers, birders, and hunters on the importance of checking and cleaning vehicles and gear and another targeting the users of Vermont’s 39 rail trails covering 410 miles about how to identify and report tree-of-heaven and spotted lanternfly.
- The UCF team, led graciously by Ginger, attempted to recruit and hire an ECO Americorps member through the State of Vermont to support the Forest Pest First Detector Program. After several leads, we ultimately were unsuccessful in recruiting a candidate and are pivoting in this regard to consider working with UVM interns in the coming year instead.

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

- Funding: The next two years of the program (2023 and 2024) will be supported by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars, as part of the Governor's 2022 budget and alignment with the Vermont Climate Action Plan. We are now under a 2-year subaward agreement with the Arbor Day Foundation that includes all of the ARPA reporting requirements.
- Fall 2023 Free Tree Giveaway: 250 free trees were given away to residents of Brattleboro and Rutland City; this brings our total for 2023 to 1,250.
- Planning for 2024: Gwen has begun to plan for the 2024 free tree giveaways; we will have a goal of 1,750 trees through spring and fall giveaways in several communities.
- We conducted an informal tree survival survey to participants who have received a tree from 2017-2022. The survey was just one question: Is your tree(s) still alive? Participants were able to click an answer (yes, no, 1 survived/1 did not, or did not receive a tree) directly from their email. If they had more comments, they were invited to share more via a google form or respond to the email. The survey response rate was roughly 25% for the most recent years (2021-22), then decreased to 12-18% for 2017-2020. Using the responses gathered, we are estimating a roughly 70-80% survival rate of trees from 2017-2022.

Fruit and Nut Tree Program

- The 2023 subaward agreement with the [Vermont Garden Network](#) (VGN) to support fruit and nut tree plantings at community gardens statewide has been closed; [11 grant recipients](#) were awarded funds for fruit and nut tree planting and maintenance.
- The 2024 subaward agreement with VGN has been executed; we will again be awarded the organization \$15,000 of our core US Forest Service budget to run this mini-grant program. This quarter we met with our VGN partners and discussed the timeline and grant application process.

1t.org - Trillion Trees Pledge

VT UCF and FPR have made [a pledge to plant 5,000 trees](#) through [1t.org](#), a World Economic Forum initiative to accelerate nature-based solutions in support of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The 5,000 trees we are committed to planting in urban areas will be funded and supported through the Governor's 2022 budget (\$1 mil) and in alignment with the Vermont Climate Action Plan. Elise is now sitting on the 1t.org Urban Forestry Working Group, a group of professionals and practitioners across the country that meet quarterly (virtually) to discuss a variety of broad urban forestry issues.

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

- The [2024 Growing Works of Art](#) contest is live. After years of collaborating with FPR's Conservation Education Program, VT UCF is taking over all coordination of the contest this year. This year's theme is "ABCs of Trees". Students must choose a letter of the alphabet and identify a tree-themed word.
- UCF staff have begun to discuss the 2024 Vermont Arbor Day Conference; we will continue to hold it at the Vermont Technical College campus in Randolph sometime in May 2024.

Recognition Programs:

- We support the [Tree City USA, Tree Campus USA, and Tree Line USA](#) program and this year the Arbor Day Foundation is launching a new application portal. This quarter we fielded many questions from VT applicants regarding the new portal.

Forest Pest First Detectors

- No updates this quarter

Backyard Woods Course

- 2023 Course: The [fall 2023 course](#) ran October 2nd - November 3rd. Backyard Woods is a self-paced, free, online course designed for homeowners with less than 25 acres who want to learn more about the woods in their backyard: what's in it, who (wildlife) uses it, and how they can become better caretakers of it. 63 participants joined the course, and a smaller cohort completed all course material. Two live discussions were highly informative and valued by participants.

Forestry Education Programs

- ourVTwoods.org 2.0: With Kate's departure from UCF, plans are currently on hold for the redesign of the ourVTwoods website. Partners from UVM Extension, FPR, VT Coverts, and Vermont Woodlands Association had met a couple of times at the end of last year, but momentum here has slowed. Kate and Elise have plans to make a final call on ourVTwoods in the new year.
- 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; grant agreements are in place for partner organizations Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Woodlands Association, Vermont Coverts, UVM Extension, and VYCC.
 - UCF's Joanne Garton has stepped onto the WOW Steering Committee in the new year to keep the program engaged with the project and the group. WOW has completed all of its demonstration projects funded by the current Landscape-Scale Restoration grant and will lead guided field walks to these sites in 2024.

Youth Engagement

- VT Works for Women: Joanne and Gwen hosted a table at the Women Can Do Event in October. We had information on the benefits of trees, tree identification, and invasive forest pests. We chatted with a great group of students who were curious about our work and wanted to explore their interest in trees.
- TRY for the Environment: Teens Reaching Youth (TRY) has 25 students (7 teams) for the Forests and Trees program this year. Teen teachers range from 8th grade to seniors. The lessons have been reduced from 6 to 4, in hopes that teen teachers will have an easier time finding a host classroom. Gwen hosted the teen training day at the Barre Auditorium.
- Mentorship/Internship with Cabot School Senior. In a weekly visit to Cabot School, Adam has been teaching a student there to assess, climb, and prune campus trees, and supporting the school's efforts to organize into a TreeCampus K-12 through the Arbor Day Foundation, a senior project that will culminate in hands on learning and a tree planting project along with the formation of a school tree group that will be composed of both staff and students.
- Rubenstein Perennial Internship: UCF staff pulled together an application and proposed project to host a UVM Rubenstein School intern for summer 2024; we are awaiting to hear if we will be matched with a student.
- Presentations:
 - Elise presented for a UVM Urban Ecology course in October.
 - Elise presented for a VTC Horticulture course in November.

- Elise and Adam presented for a UVM Forest Health course in December.

Professional Arborists

- Elise worked with the New England Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture to host a Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) recertification course, followed by a full TRAQ course, at the Essex ANR complex in mid-October. These trainings were attended by 20+ professional arborists, from New England and New York.

Media/Communications:

- Social Media: Continue to support our social media account (Facebook); VT Forests, Parks & Recreation now has social media channels and a process to submit posts that the UCF team has taken advantage of. FPR has hired a Communications Coordinator; she will be meeting the team at our next quarterly meeting to discuss communication needs.
- Newsletters: Bimonthly TREEmail; monthly VolunTREEmail, semi-monthly bulletin for Forest Pest First Detectors
- Website: Continue to maintain and improve the site - www.vtcommunityforestry.org. While the site upgrade is mostly complete, we continue to work with Tamarack media on a few key features of the site (UCF Impact Map and Town Forest Stewardship Library).
- Across the Fence: no updates this quarter.

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/department 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.	✓

Tree Wardens

- We worked with ANR IT this quarter to make some improvements to our tree warden database and reporting portal to better serve our ability to support tree wardens and communities.
- We sent an email out to the 80 tree wardens that have been reported through our Tree Warden Reporting form to remind them of technical, financial, and educational offerings available through our program.

Urban Tree Planting Funding: FY22 Governor's Budget

The 2022 Governor's budget included **\$1 million for UCF** to plant 5,000 trees in urban areas to support Vermont's Climate Action Plan, funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Highlights this quarter include:

- Hiring our new Urban Forester! Adam McCullough started in late September and has been busy getting to know the UCF program, VT community needs, and how to be an employee with the State of Vermont.

- Posting the RFP for an entity to manage the urban tree planting block grant program with a goal of 2,000 trees planted in village centers and downtowns. Proposals were due in late November and we have selected our block grant entity: Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. Next steps: formalizing a grant agreement and started to work on the specifics of the grant program.

Financial Assistance to Communities

- 2023 Grants: All 16 grant agreements are in place, and projects are underway; several have even already wrapped up and been closed out.
- 2024 Grants: We have an unprecedented amount of funding to grant out for 2024 projects and [our grant program was launched](#) on 9/6. Applications for all three categories will be due January 5th, 2024. This quarter we have focused on improving our grant application process, which has included:
 - Offering monthly open Grants Office Hours to support applicants in project and application development over the course of the period that we are accepting applications.
 - Answering lots and lots of questions from potential applicants about eligibility, project design, and administration of awards.

Summary of available funds:

- \$70,000 will be available for Caring for Canopy Grants (1:1 match)
- \$125,000 will be available for Growing Urban Forests in the Face of EAB (1:1 match)
- \$300,000 will be available for Inflation Reduction Act State Allocation grants (no match, only “disadvantaged communities” are eligible) See section above.

Financial and Programming Partnerships

UVM Extension:

- Gwen has taken over as the PI on the UVM Extension grant.
- The 2023/2024 UVM Extension subaward agreement has been executed.

US Forest Service:

- Elise is serving on the Northeast Midwest State Foresters Alliance (NMSFA) Trees & Public Health Committee.
- Elise attended the USFS 50-state meeting in Washington DC in October.
- Elise, Adam, and Joanne attended the NE/NY USFS regional meeting in Portsmouth, NH in early December.

Forests, Parks & Recreation:

- Elise served on the hiring committee for both FPR's Communications Coordinator and FPR's new Invasives Coordinator. Megan Davin was hired as the Communications Coordinator and interviews for the Invasives position were conducted in late November.
- Elise serves on Forestry's Management Team and meets weekly to discuss Division-wide issues and projects.
- The Forestry Division successfully pushed through a reclassification of the Forestry Professional series; there are now 5 job classes (Forestry Professional 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5) with clear guidance on career progression. Some currently Forestry staff have been reclassified into new positions through this reclassification.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity (JEDI) work

- Our program team continues to meet monthly to discuss topics of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Topics this quarter have included navigating unique partnerships, considering creative ways that our program can provide smaller and less complicated mini-grants or tree planting assistance, and a discussion sparked by the Brave Little State podcast's Recognized series about Vermont's four state-recognized tribes.
- The Agency of Natural Resources has launched its Environmental Justice Working Group and Liaison initiative to support implementation of the Vermont Environmental Justice Law (Act 154 of 2022). Elise is acting as both a member of the EJ Working Group and one of three Liaisons for FPR. This quarter, the full working group met in person for a half-day meeting to calibrate on the work to come to meet the objectives of the law.
- In late September, the US Forest Service held two half-day virtual meetings to support state UCF programs in engaging with environmental justice communities through the unprecedented state IRA allocations. These training opportunities will continue in 2024.

Professional Development

- After participating in the Green Communities Leadership Institute as a cohort member last year, Elise was asked to join the Core Leadership Team for the Institute and is now engaged in planning for the 2024 program.
- Elise and Gwen traveled to Washington DC to attend the World Forum on Urban Forests.
- Joanne has been auditing Tony D'Amato's Silviculture class at UVM this semester.

Program Staffing

- Maintaining weekly check-ins online.

- We held our quarterly staff meeting in Montpelier.

Council

- There are two vacant Council seats: one at-large, one VWA seat. Council will engage in a conversation about Council composition at the December meeting.
- Tim Smith and Scott Wunderle are serving as the Leadership Committee for the 2023 calendar year; Richard Amore and Josh Behounek will rotate in for 2024.