

NORTHEASTERN AREA URBAN FORESTRY COORDINATORS ORGANIZATION

RESOLUTION

ISSUE OF CONCERN:

There is no systematic method of continuously assessing the nation's urban forest resource, as there is for timberlands. This prevents the Forest Service and the states from developing resource-based objectives and performance measures for the nation's urban forests and their urban forestry programs. Without a continuous urban forestry inventory, the federal, state and local programs will continue to suffer from lack of support. Currently there are several efforts at urban forest assessment that are uncoordinated, disparate and inadequately supported.

BACKGROUND:

In 1990, Forest Service State and Private Forestry began a concerted effort in urban forestry as a result of the 1990 Farm Bill. The focus at that time was program development – get staff, councils and strategic plans established in the states. Since then the focus has largely remained program oriented – provide assistance, engage partners, expand awareness. For example the Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry program's recently released "Blueprint for the Future" identifies six management strategies and four desired outcomes. All six management strategies are program-based as are 3 of the outcomes. However, the fourth outcome "Urban and community forest resources are maintained, protected and expanded nationwide" does begin to address the resource.

The difficulty with this last outcome is that there is no inventory of the resource to be able to assess progress towards achieving it and no management strategy to change this situation. In contrast, when an urban forestry coordinator visits a community, the first thing that is recommended is an inventory of the resource. How can you know where you want to go and how to get there if you don't know where you are in the first place? The inventory is the basis for prioritizing our strategic and management plans and the basis of monitoring progress towards our goals. Why has it been so hard to establish performance-based allocations? Because we simply have information on our efforts, not on how our efforts have changed the resource for the better of the nation's citizens. Why has our national budget for urban forestry been flat? Because we can't show Congress and the President what we need because we don't know what we have.

There have been several efforts to do a snapshot assessment, develop tools for assessment or incorporate urban areas into existing systems. These include among others the 2000 RPA Assessment, the UFORE and STRATUM models, American Forest's City Green, and Forest Health Monitoring's pilot urban forest health monitoring systems. However there is no concerted effort to unify these into a system comparable to the Forest Service's Forest Inventory and Assessment, which provides the basis for timberland planning. Without a continuous urban forestry inventory, the federal, state and local programs will continue to suffer from lack of support. In local areas that have done detailed assessments, the results are very powerful tools not only for strategic planning, but also to garner support from local decision-makers. The Forest Service and the states need this capability to legitimize the urban forest resource and establish the importance of its management.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the urban forests of the United States provide myriad economic, social and environmental benefits to the vast majority of the citizens of this country, and

WHEREAS the United States does not have a systematic, continuous forest inventory and assessment program for its urban forest resource, as it does for its timberlands, and

WHEREAS such an inventory would characterize the nation's urban forests and the benefits they provide over time, and

WHEREAS it is necessary to have an inventory of any resource to determine the goals for the resource and the appropriate management needed to achieve those goals, and

WHEREAS changes in the urban forest resource will increase or diminish the benefits that the urban forest provides the nation's citizens and can be used to measure and justify the management needed at the federal, state and local levels, and

WHEREAS currently there are numerous efforts in urban forest assessment that are uncoordinated and disparate, and

WHEREAS the USDA Forest Service and NASF are in a position to provide leadership in unifying these efforts to develop a national system of urban forest inventory and assessment,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the USDA Forest Service make it a priority to work together with NASF to develop and coordinate an ongoing, systematic inventory and assessment of the nation's urban forest resource that will quantify the resource, assess its character and quantify the benefits that this resource provides the citizens of the nation, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the USDA Forest Service and NASF convene a task force representing the Forest Service, NASF, state urban forestry coordinators, and other specialists to:

1. evaluate current urban forest inventory efforts,
2. establish a national continuous urban forest inventory and assessment protocol,
3. propose an implementation strategy, and
4. recommend a funding method, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the USDA Forest Service and the states work together to develop goals for each state's resource that will optimize the benefits that the urban forest provides and to develop indicators that will measure progress towards those goals.

NAUFCO ACTION

(X) Approved Unanimously

ATTEST: Eric Seaborn
Chair, NAUFCO

() Disapproved

() Tabled

Witness: Randy Cook
Secretary, NAUFCO

DATE OF ACTION: May 14, 2004