

The Role of the State Forestry Agency in Urban Forestry

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Overview

The State forestry agency offers many resources and opportunities for working with communities. Population growth, urbanization, and changes in land use underscore the need for communities to manage their urban forest. As an employee of the State forestry agency, you are in a unique position to provide information and assistance to communities in your State.

This unit first reviews the reasons that your State forestry agency is involved in urban forestry and the types of assistance that can be provided. The following section is about the importance of partnerships to the State urban forestry program. The final section describes the different responsibilities State forestry agency employees have in delivering the urban forestry message to communities.

Is This Work?

A Day in the Park

The once rural area was being urbanized quickly, with several new subdivisions being built on the outskirts of the town. The local parks and recreation board asked for help in planning and developing a new park in the area. This was the reason Dave, the county urban forester, and Jim, a rural forester, found themselves in the area this particular summer morning. Trees had been tagged for removal, and the two foresters wanted to make sure it had been done according to the approved plan. Suddenly they heard a scream and went running. A young boy was standing near the edge of a marshy creek, watching his fishing pole being dragged into the water. Afraid of snakes and not wanting to wade into the mud at the edge of the creek, the youngster did not know what to do. Jim finally could not stand it any longer -- he had to see what kind of fish was on the other end of that line. Taking off his boots and rolling up his pants, he waded in, grabbed the pole, and reeled in a two- pound catfish. Turning to Dave, he said, "If all I have to do is look at trees and go fishing, urban forestry isn't so bad."

*I like trees because they seem more resigned to the way they have to live than other things do.
Willa Cather, O Pioneers!*

Before You Begin

The State forestry agency has a wide range of people, resources, and programs that can be used to assist various individuals and local groups with their forestry efforts. The following questions are intended to encourage you to think about the urban forestry work you do and the programs that support this work.

- What urban forestry work is currently being done by your local office? Why is it important for you and your office to be involved in these programs and activities in the local community?

- In your own work, what types of urban forestry assistance have you been able to provide to individuals and groups?

- The State forestry agency has a number of different programs and roles related to urban forestry. How do you think an understanding of these will help you in working with people in the community?

On a separate piece of paper describe the urban forestry work you currently know about and how this work is a part of your job.

Why Is the State Forestry Agency Involved?

The State forestry agency mission is usually broadly defined and addresses issues such as forest health, fire protection, forest management, and education. Urban forestry incorporates all the customary roles of the State forestry agency while also addressing the unique needs of urban areas. There are three main reasons why the State forestry agency is involved with urban forestry: leadership, urbanization, and legislation.

Leadership

The State forestry agency has the expertise to assist communities in building their own capabilities to manage their urban forests and to increase awareness and promote the benefits of urban forestry. Employees of the State forestry agency have established working relationships with local governments, schools, community non-profit groups, businesses, and others throughout the State. In extending these relationships the agency serves as a facilitator among various groups of researchers, practitioners, and community members, bringing them together to help solve problems and address local urban forestry issues.

Urbanization

The South has become increasingly urbanized with more than 60 percent of the population now living in urban areas. "Among the South's 13 states, those having the highest rates of growth since 1970 were Florida (more than doubling with 118.8 percent growth), Texas (73.9 percent), Georgia (63.1 percent), South Carolina (46.9 percent), North Carolina (46.3 percent) and Virginia (46.0 percent)" (Cordell and others, in press). To meet the demands of the increasing urban population and the impact on the natural resources, the State forestry agency devotes resources, including time and personnel, to urban forestry and related natural resource issues. This involvement in urban forestry benefits the State forestry agency and communities in many ways.

- Providing assistance in urban areas facilitates contact with urban constituents.
- Planning for the management, conservation, and protection of the urban and rural forest increases the forestry agency's impact on future land-use patterns.
- Offering forest management assistance to owners of rural forestland at the urban-rural interface.
- Assisting local governments, citizens, and community groups increases the awareness of the benefits urban and rural forests provide.
- Being involved in the local community allows the total forestry message to be communicated to urban residents.



How much of the land in the area where you work is considered urban? What percentage of the people live in urban areas?



As an employee of your State forestry agency you have the opportunity to assist in urban forestry projects.

Legislation

Although specific legislation varies among States, the State forestry agency has the authority to provide forestry related assistance to communities and individuals. The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, as amended by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (commonly known as the 1990 Farm Bill) authorizes the State forestry agency to deliver urban forestry services through the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program. The role of the State forestry agency is to provide statewide program leadership and technical and financial assistance to communities in cooperation with the State Urban Forest Council and other partners.

The Cooperative Forestry Assistant Act of 1978, as amended, also authorizes the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service to provide leadership, research, and technical and financial assistance to the State forestry agencies. The Forest Service's Regional Urban and Community Forestry Program provides regional leadership for the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program. The Forest Service also provides program direction and standards for use of federal funds in the State. These standards are developed in cooperation with the State forestry agencies.



Find out about the specific legislation in your State related to urban forestry.

State Forestry Agency Responsibilities in Urban Forestry

Each State forestry agency has three basic responsibilities within the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program:

- Provide technical assistance to facilitate the development of local capabilities for managing urban forests.
- Expand educational efforts to increase understanding of urban forestry.
- Offer financial support through the administration of the Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program.

The State's Urban Forestry Strategic Plan

It is also the responsibility of the State forestry agency to ensure that an Urban Forestry Strategic Plan is developed for the State. The Strategic Plan identifies issues, strategies, and actions for the future direction of urban forestry in the State. The Strategic Plan is often developed cooperatively with the State Urban Forest Council. Some typical goals that may be found in a strategic plan are:

- Increase citizen support and awareness of the benefits of the urban forest.
- Maximize the economic, environmental, and social benefits of urban forests.
- Empower and work with communities, groups, and individuals to maintain urban trees and forests.
- Encourage the involvement of many diverse individuals.



Your State's strategic plan for urban forestry is a good source of information.

Technical Assistance

The employees of the State forestry agency offer technical assistance to help local governments, non-profit organizations, homeowners, and others with urban forestry-related concerns or issues. The State forestry agency may provide several different types of technical assistance:

- Site and tree selection
- Tree planting
- Tree diagnosis and treatment
- Urban forest management plans
- Tree inventories
- Tree protection plans
- Regional development plans
- Other urban forestry activities

Educational Assistance

The State forestry agency employees give educational assistance by planning and implementing programs and demonstration projects in urban forestry, including workshops, conferences, and publications. In addition, the Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program often funds educational projects developed by communities. The type of educational assistance provided usually depends upon the educational needs of the particular State. A State forestry agency can:

- Produce videos for developers on protecting trees during construction.
- Sponsor a workshop on trees and the law.
- Sponsor a Project Learning Tree workshop for teachers.
- Assist with the Urban Forest Council's annual conference.
- Write articles for the Urban Forest Council's newsletter.
- Speak to community groups and civic clubs.
- Engage in other educational activities.



State forestry agency employees can provide a variety of educational programs about urban forestry ranging from professional workshops to school presentations.

Financial Assistance

The State forestry agency provides financial assistance through the Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program to local governments, educational institutions, communities, and non-profit groups. The grant program awards competitive, matching grants to communities and organizations for programs that meet the criteria established by the National Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program and any additional State guidelines. Awards are made on a 50-percent cost-share basis. Some States may also provide State funds for these

activities. The grant program enables local communities to develop or expand their urban forestry programs. Several types of projects have been funded by the grant program:

- Tree inventories
- Urban forestry management plans
- Outdoor classrooms
- Urban forestry brochures, publications and videos
- Conferences and workshops
- Other urban forestry related activities



Alabama has a web site for their Urban and Community Forestry Financial Assistance Program (<http://www.aces.edu/ucf>)

Partnerships in Urban Forestry

The State forestry agency has developed partnerships involving individuals, community organizations, local and State government, private industry, and others interested in urban forestry. This network facilitates the exchange of information and cooperation among a wide variety of partners. The State forestry agency's relationship with all of these partners is key to the delivery of urban forestry programs at the local level.

State Urban Forest Council

Many of these partnerships are developed through the State's Urban Forest Council. This is an organization of active citizens, urban forestry practitioners, government representatives, and people with related interests. The Council has an essential role in implementing the urban and community forest program at the State and local level. It facilitates the exchange of ideas and needs among different groups through newsletters and annual conferences, provides education, and establishes grass roots support. It also encourages networking among the communities, organizations, and industries involved in urban forestry. Input from the Urban Forest Council helps the State Forester in program planning, delivery of technical assistance, and leadership development. The State Urban Forest Council is an important partner of the State forestry agency because it can:

- Advise on direction of the urban forestry program.
- Promote the exchange of ideas and information within the State.
- Sponsor educational activities and technical support.
- Assist in reviewing grant proposals.
- Give grass roots support for urban forestry activities.
- Promote the value and benefits of urban forestry.



These State Urban Forest Councils in the Southern Region have web sites: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Local, Regional, State and National Partners

Through the urban forestry program, the State forestry agency can develop numerous partnerships with a wide variety of individuals and organizations:

- City foresters, arborists, engineers and landscape architects
- Citizen non-profit tree groups
- Local government agencies, commissions, and departments, such as county commissions, planning commissions, and public works departments
- Utility companies
- Tree care companies
- Nurseries
- Garden Clubs of America local affiliates

- Councils of government
- School districts, community colleges and universities
- Forest industry
- Private landowners
- Land trusts
- Professional associations, such as homebuilders, landscape architects, nurserymen, planners and arborists.
- State League of Municipalities
- State government agencies and commissions, such as the Departments of Transportation, Natural Resources, and Environmental Protection
- National non-profit organizations, such as American Forests and National Arbor Day Foundation.
- National Tree Trust



There are many opportunities to work with partners developing urban forestry programs.

Partnerships and Programs with U.S. Department of Agriculture

The State forestry agency maintains partnerships with various branches of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that conduct research and supply technical assistance to urban communities and organizations.

Forest Service

In addition to the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program, the Forest Service has other programs related to urban forestry:

- Rural Community Assistance
- Marketing and Utilization
- Nursery Tree Improvement Assistance
- Forest Management and Tax Assistance
- Research Stations and Research Work Units
- National Forest Supervisor and District Offices

State Cooperative Extension Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service offices at universities and at the county level provide research results and technical assistance on urban natural resource issues, including trees, soil, wildlife, horticulture, and landscaping. Regional or county agents can also assist in the field.

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

The NRCS affords technical assistance and services on resource-related issues in urban areas. It advises local governments, community groups, and individuals on soil conservation and erosion control, water quality improvements, streambank stabilization, and improvement of buffer zones. Educational programs are also offered for teachers and students in local schools.



Local numbers for the county extension office and the NRCS are in the phone book.

Positions in the State Forestry Agency

Various State forestry agency employees have responsibilities related to urban forestry activities. However, everybody in the agency may have the opportunity to assist a homeowner, organization, or local community on an urban forestry-related project. Working collaboratively with the people in the communities, you can contribute information and skills that will help the urban forest. There are various ways the State forestry agency can provide urban forestry assistance (table1).

Table 1. Examples of the types of assistance the State forestry agency can provide and potential recipients

Technical/Educational Assistance	Planning Assistance	Potential Recipients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree inventories • Urban forest assessments • Hazard tree identification • Tree diagnosis and treatment • Tree protection techniques • Construction site evaluation • Individual consultations Workshops • Presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency management plans • Urban Forest Council • Grant management • Urban forestry planning & management • Coordination of volunteer efforts • Environmental conservation plans • Recreation site management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeowners • Community and civic groups • School groups • Non-profit groups • Local governments • Local businesses • Professional practitioners • Utility companies • Local media • Tree Boards • Urban forest councils

Job classifications vary from state to state, but the following are general descriptions of urban forestry responsibilities for different positions within the State forestry agency:

Forest Rangers and Technicians

In some State's, the forest rangers and technicians respond to requests for help on an individual tree or urban forestry problem. The technical knowledge and skill of these employees are important in supplying the customer with accurate information. In addition, the rangers may be involved in other aspects of urban forestry, such as assisting local communities in implementing grant programs and working with non-profit organizations.

Service, County, and Urban Foresters

These individuals often give technical assistance to local government representatives, professional practitioners, non-profit groups, schools, and others, involved in urban

forestry activities. Because of their familiarity with urban forestry issues in a community, they can often play an important role in communicating educational and technical information to the public.

District, Regional, and Area Urban Foresters and Urban Regional Specialists

These foresters promote regional programs for cities and communities to help them develop or expand urban forestry programs and local volunteer efforts. They also give technical support to the rangers and foresters within their district, region, or area.

Urban Forestry Partnership Coordinator

The Partnership Coordinator assists the Urban Forestry Coordinator in managing the State urban forestry program. Although the Partnership Coordinator responsibilities vary with each State, administration and management of grant funds are often a part of this job.

Urban Forestry Coordinator

The Urban Forestry Coordinator administers the urban forestry program for the State forestry agency. Responsibilities often include:

- Coordinating the State's urban forestry programs, initiatives, accomplishment reports, strategic plan, and special projects
- Administering the urban and community forestry grant program
- Supervising the Partnership Coordinator and other staff, as appropriate
- Coordinating of the State's Tree City USA and Arbor Day programs
- Communicating with all State forestry employees on urban forestry related issues
- Coordinating urban forestry training programs for State forestry agency employees
- Developing urban forestry publications and videos
- Networking with current and potential partners
- Serving as State forestry agency liaison with Urban Forest Council
- Serving as principal point of contact with the Forest Service Regional Urban Forestry Coordinator

State Forester

As administrative head of the agency, the State Forester carries the overall responsibility of incorporating the goals of the urban forestry program into the agency's goal of promoting the economic, social, and environmental benefits and use of the forests for all the State's citizens. This individual gives statewide leadership in urban forestry, facilitates new partnerships with a wide variety of groups and individuals, and ensures strong financial and technical management of the program.

Southern Group of State Foresters

The State Foresters from the southern states have formed an Urban Forestry Working Group, comprised of State Urban Forestry Coordinators from across the region. This group assists the State Foresters in developing long-range planning, assessing needs, and finding funds for programs related to urban forestry. The attention to urban forestry at this level

assures that the benefits of the urban forest will continue to enhance the quality of urban life.



The States in the southern region are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Checking Your Understanding of the Role of the State Forestry Agency

On a separate sheet of paper, answer these questions about the important points you need to remember:

1. What are the three major reasons your State forestry agency is involved in urban forestry? What are the major leadership skills that people in your agency can provide in urban forestry?
2. What are the three main responsibilities of the State forestry agency in urban forestry? How does the agency go about achieving this goal? Name a partnership, program, or activity that is an example of each type of assistance.
3. Describe the responsibilities of the ranger and the forester in urban forestry. How will doing these things help with the management of the urban forest in your community?

The answers are at the end of the unit.

Case Study

Putting the Pieces Together

Linda, the County Forester, knows that her town has a good Tree Board. In the past 7 years it has developed into one of the most active and well-organized boards in the State. At a recent meeting, the city's landscape maintenance employees were the topic of discussion. The Board members realized that additional training in arboriculture would help these employees become more productive and, more importantly, would improve the quality of their work. The Board decided that a 2-day workshop sometime during January would be the best way to provide this training. As an ex-officio member of the Board, Linda was asked to serve as technical advisor to the workshop planning committee.

The workshop planning committee quickly discovered there was no one in the town with the expertise to conduct an arborist workshop. In fact, the group was not sure what information should be included, or where to look for help in planning and presenting the program.

The committee asked Linda three questions:

- What training needs to be included in the program?
- Where can we find speakers to present the topics for the workshop?
- Where can we find money to pay for it?

Linda had a lot to do before her next meeting with the Tree Board.

You and the Tree Board

Put yourself in Linda's place. What steps would you take to help the Tree Board plan a successful workshop? Use the challenge questions below to guide your planning, thinking of the people and resources available to you through your State forestry agency.

- Now that you have been asked to help, describe what you see as your role in the planning process.
- You are not certain how it was decided that a workshop would be helpful. What would you recommend the Tree Board do to find out the specific topics that should be included in the training?
- Once the topics have been determined, is there someone you would consult?
- How can you help identify the best people to teach at the workshop?
- Are there people, programs, or resources available to the State agency that might be helpful in providing information?
- Are there funds available to cover the basic expenses of the workshop?

After you have described the things you would do and the suggestions you would make to the Tree Board, compare them to what Linda actually did.

The Rest of the Story

Solving the puzzle

Linda was excited that the Tree Board was interested in offering additional training to the city's landscape maintenance workers. This was just the type of activity that had made the Board so successful, and she was glad to be able to help. But it was going to take some work! No one even knew the topics to include in the workshop, nor speakers who could present them.

The first thing she decided to do was help the Tree Board better understand the actual training needs of their city tree workers. She encouraged the members to meet with the city officials to get their input and commitment to the training. Some of the Tree Board members even spent one morning with some of the workers on the job to find out what they needed to learn. Once Board members had all this information, they had no problem filling the schedule for two days of training.

Now that they knew the topics to include, who was going to do the training? Linda went to work on the telephone. First she called the State's Urban Forestry Coordinator for advice and recommendations for the speakers. The coordinator suggested that she also contact the Partnership Coordinator and the State's Urban Forest Council, which she did. Both of these phone calls brought great results. The Urban Forest Council agreed to sponsor the workshop and to help with arrangements and speakers. The Partnership Coordinator also suggested some great speakers from among the contacts with various groups throughout the State, including people with the Cooperative Extension Service, the Urban Forester from the largest city in the State, and a representative from the regional chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture. With this list, the members of the Tree Board had more than enough qualified speakers to fill the schedule. The Board was so excited about the program, they decided to open the workshop to all of the communities in the region.

Now the hard part - money! As a local, non-profit group, raising money was not easy. The expenses for this workshop were modest, but there were supplies and printing costs. Another call to the State Urban Forestry Coordinator solved this problem, too. It was suggested that the Tree Board apply for an urban and community forestry grant. Linda gave them guidelines for writing and submitting the grant, and they received the funds needed to pay for the workshop.

Linda was glad that the Tree Board had begun planning early. It took time to arrange sponsorship with the Urban Forest Council, contact and schedule the speakers, and apply for the grant, but the results were worth it. The municipal tree workers from all the communities in the area had a well-planned, successful workshop.

Two Workshops to Compare

Did you plan your workshop differently? As long as they were both successful, it makes no difference! How did Linda's suggestions compare with yours? Has reading this account made you think of other possibilities you did not consider before?

- Did you suggest a different way for determining the topics that needed to be included in the workshop? If so, do you think one way is better than the other?
- Whom did you contact to help identify available people and resources?
- Knowing your community, are there specific individuals, organizations, or programs the State agency works with that you might have suggested for the workshop?
- Did you find the same source of money to pay expenses? Are there other possible sources or ways to pay for this type of program?

Next?

This unit presents an overview of the responsibilities, programs, and types of assistance that are part of your State forestry agency's role and activities in urban and community forestry. Use the questions on this page to look at how the information presented can help you assist the urban forestry efforts in your community.

- How will this broad perspective of the State forestry agency's role in urban forestry help you do your job better?

- How can you use this information to help your local community address the issues and opportunities they have in urban forestry? What group or local program would benefit from some specific assistance now?

- Who are the individuals and groups in your community that you may be able to work with on urban forestry issues? What resources are available from the State forestry agency that you would suggest to them?

- What other information about the State forestry agency's role in urban forestry would be helpful for you to know?

For More Information

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Checking Your Answers About the Role of the State Forestry Agency

1. What are the three major reasons your State forestry agency is involved in urban forestry? What are the major leadership skills that people in your agency can provide in urban forestry?

Your State forestry agency is involved in urban forestry for three reasons:

- **Legislation:** Legislation by the Federal government and individual States defines the role of the State forestry agency in supporting urban forestry. Federal support is given to the State through the office of the State Forester. State legislation generally provides the authority for the State forestry agency to assist communities and individuals with forestry related issues.
- **Urbanization:** The continued growth of urban areas has increased the need to address the specific problems that land development and increased population have caused for trees. Your agency has the experience to assist in maintaining the health of urban trees and solving other problems.
- **Leadership:** Your knowledge and training enable you to work with the public in promoting the benefits of urban trees and supporting efforts to manage them effectively.

2. What are the three main responsibilities of the State forestry agency in urban forestry? How does the agency go about achieving this goal? Name a partnership, program or activity that is an example of each type of assistance.

The basic responsibilities of the State forestry agency in urban forestry include:

- **Technical assistance:** Assisting with tree inventories, helping local professionals improve their skills, and matching tree species to the site are examples of the types of technical assistance that may be given.
- **Educational assistance:** This can include sponsoring workshops and demonstrations on the planting and care of trees, increasing awareness of the economic and environmental benefits of trees, and working with local volunteer groups.
- **Financial assistance:** The primary financial assistance is the urban and community forestry grant program which provides funds to local communities. You may be involved in helping local groups meet the requirements for receiving the grants, serving on grant review boards, and in providing technical or educational assistance to the grant recipient.

There are many more specific ways that your office may assist the community. Many of the things you do may have far-reaching benefits. For example, by giving technical advice on the proper planting of a specific tree, you are also helping teach correct planting methods that can be used later.

3. Describe the responsibilities of the ranger and the forester in urban forestry. How will doing these things help with the management of the urban forest in your community?

In general, rangers and foresters are responsible for working with people in the local community to address specific urban forestry problems or questions and offering technical and educational information to both individuals and groups. The jobs vary in each office, but working with local citizens can increase the visibility of the State forestry agency, promote the benefits of the urban forest, inform the people about programs available to the community, and help them in addressing general issues about forestry.