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## Post-Construction Storm Water Management in New Development & Redevelopment

### Urban Forestry

#### Description

Urban forestry is the study of trees and forests in and around towns and cities. Since trees absorb water, patches of forest and the trees that line streets can help provide some of the storm water management required in an urban setting. Urban forests also help break up a landscape of impervious cover, provide small but essential green spaces, and link walkways and trails. Successful urban forestry requires a conservation plan for individual trees as well as forest areas larger than 10,000 feet<sup>2</sup>. A local forest or tree ordinance is one technique for achieving conservation, and when specific measures to protect and manage these areas are included, urban forests and trees can also help reduce storm water management needs in urban areas.



Trees can be incorporated into urban landscapes for water quality benefits in addition to aesthetic and shade benefits (Source: Tree City USA, no date)

#### Applicability

From a stream preservation perspective, it is ideal to retain as much contiguous forest as possible. At the same time, this may not be an option in many urban areas. If forested areas are fragmented, it is ideal to retain the closest fragments together.

In rapidly urbanizing areas, where clearing and grading are important, tree preservation areas should be clearly marked. Delineating lines along a critical root zone (CRZ) rather than a straight line is essential to preserving trees and can help reduce homeowner complaints about tree root interference into sewer or septic lines.

#### Implementation

The concept of the CRZ is essential to a proper management plan. The CRZ is the area around a tree required for the tree's survival. Determined by the tree size and species, as well as soil conditions, for isolated specimen trees, the CRZ can be estimated as 1-1/2 feet of radial distance for every inch of tree diameter. In larger areas of trees, the CRZ of forests can be estimated at 1 foot of radial distance for every inch of tree diameter, or a minimum of 8 feet.

An urban forestry plan should include measures to establish, conserve, and/or reestablish preservation areas. A forest preservation ordinance is one way to set design standards outlining how a forest should be preserved and managed. The ordinance should outline some basic management techniques and should contain some essential elements. The following is a list of some typical elements of a forest conservation plan:

Source: US Environmental Protection Agency, March 2003



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- A map and narrative description of the forest and the surrounding area that includes topography, soils, streams, current forested and unforested areas, tree lines, critical habitats, and 100-year flood plain.
- An assessment that establishes preservation, reforestation, and afforestation areas.
- A forest conservation map that outlines forest retention areas, reforestation, afforestation, protective devices, limits of disturbance, and stockpile areas.
- A schedule of any additional construction in and around the forest area.
- A specific management plan, including tree and forest protection measures.
- A reforestation and afforestation plan.

An ordinance can also be developed that addresses tree preservation at the site level both during construction and after construction is complete. This type of ordinance can be implemented on a smaller scale and can be integrated with a proposed development's erosion and sediment control and storm water pollution prevention plans, which many communities require of new developments.

American Forests, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and restoring forests in the United States, adopted an ecosystem restoration and maintenance agenda in 1999 to assist communities in planning and implementing tree and forest actions to restore and maintain healthy ecosystems and communities (American Forests, 2000). The agenda presents the organization's core values and policy goals as the basis for policy statements and as information to help community-based partners to prepare their own policy statements. Key policy goals include

- Increasing public and private sector investment in ecosystem restoration and maintenance activities
- Promoting an ecosystem workforce through training and apprenticeship programs and new job opportunities
- Building support for innovative monitoring systems to ensure collaborative learning and adaptive management
- Encouraging a "civic science" approach to ecosystem research that respects local knowledge, seeks community participation, and provides accessible information for communities.

### Limitations

One of the biggest limitations to urban forestry is development pressure. Ordinances, conservation easements, and other techniques that are designed into a management program can help alleviate future development pressures. The size of the land may also limit the ability to protect individual trees. In these areas, a tree ordinance may be a more practical approach.

Forests may also harbor undesirable wildlife elements including insects and other pests. If forests border houses, this may be a concern for residents.

### Maintenance Considerations

Maintenance considerations for urban forests may require fringe landscaping and trash pick-up. By using native vegetation and keeping the area as natural as possible, maintenance efforts can be minimized.

### Effectiveness

There are numerous environmental and storm water benefits to urban forestry. These include the absorption of carbon dioxide by trees, reduction of temperature, and provision of habitat for urban wildlife.

Source: US Environmental Protection Agency, March 2003



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Urban forests can also act as natural storm water management areas by filtering particulate matter (pollutants, some nutrients, and sediment) and by absorption of water. Urban forestry also reduces noise levels, provides recreational benefits, and increases property values. Urban forests and trees are known to have numerous environmental benefits, including pollutant removal. Trees can absorb water, pollutant gases, airborne particulates, sediment, nitrogen, phosphorous, and pesticides. There are numerous economic benefits to urban forests, including proven increases in property values. In addition, by preserving trees and forests, clearing and grading as well as erosion and sediment costs are saved during construction. Maintenance costs are also minimized by keeping areas as natural as possible (Table 1).

Table 1: Annual maintenance costs of different types of green spaces (Adapted from Brown et al., 1998)

Land Use	Approximate Annual Maintenance Costs	Source
Natural Open Space: Only minimum maintenance, trash/debris cleanup	\$75/acre/year	NPS, 1995
Lawns: Regular mowing	\$270 to \$240/acre/year	WHEC, 1992
Passive Recreation	\$200/acre/year	NPS, 1995

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Source: US Environmental Protection Agency, March 2003



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