

NASF Resolution No. 2004-4

ORIGIN OF RESOLUTION:

Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters

ISSUE OF CONCERN:

Lack of systematic inventory and assessment of the nation's urban forest resource

BACKGROUND:

There is no systematic method of continuously assessing the nation's urban forest resource, as there is for timberlands. This prevents the USDA 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, federal, state and local programs will continue to suffer from a lack of support. Currently, there are several efforts at urban forest assessment that are uncoordinated, disparate and inadequately supported.

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, and expand awareness. For example, the "Blueprint for the Future" recently released by the USDA Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry program identifies six management strategies and four desired outcomes. All six management strategies are program-based, as are three of the outcomes. However, the fourth outcome of "Urban and community forest resources are maintained, protected and expanded nationwide" does begin to address the resource.

Without an inventory of the resource, progress cannot be adequately accessed and management strategies cannot be effectively altered as needed. The lack of a continuous assessment, similar to the Forest Inventory and Assessment, affects not only the ability to manage the resource, but also the opportunity to convey financial needs and potential benefits at the local, state, and national levels.

There have been several efforts to do snapshot assessments, develop assessment tools 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 USDA Forest Service's Forest Inventory and Assessment. In local areas that have done detailed assessments, the results have served as very powerful tools not only for strategic planning, but also for garnering support from local decision-makers. The USDA 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 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.

RESOLUTION:

Therefore, be it resolved that: the USDA Forest Service and NASF convene a task force representing the Forest Service, NASF, state urban forestry coordinators, and FIA and forest health specialists to:

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

NASF ACTION:

(X) Approved as amended

DATE OF ACTION:
September 29, 2004