

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item No.:	7
Work Plan:	Private Forests
Topic:	Urban Forestry
Presentation Title:	Urban Forestry Program Update
Date of Presentation:	November 1, 2017
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SUMMARY

The Department's Urban and Community Forestry Program (U&CF) is small, but it actively cultivates partnerships to extend its reach. At the National level, federal funding for U&CF is in peril – we will discuss strategies for outreach and survival. Throughout the nation, invasive pests are devastating urban forests and beyond. Finally many organizations and some states are investing in community trees as a tool to improve resident health.

CONTEXT

The Board of Forestry's (Board) 2011 *Forestry Program for Oregon* recognizes the value of Oregon's urban and community forests, which are "major contributors to the health and well-being of its citizens." The discussion of Goal B states urban and community forests "provide numerous health and environmental benefits: they help purify our air and water, control stormwater runoff, provide shade, reduce soil erosion, create wildlife habitat, and improve the health of riparian areas." The Board also recognizes that in recent decades, as Oregon becomes more populated and urban, resources to manage the urban forests have lagged. The Oregon Legislature states, "Trees not only are important to the economic and environmental well-being of Oregon, but also represent a significant component of the quality of life for urban residents. As a matter of policy, it is important to promote and protect the human habitat values that accrue from a healthy urban forest. Therefore, it is declared to be the public policy of the State of Oregon to encourage cities to plant and properly care for trees within the cities' urban growth boundaries and develop management plans to protect and promote urban forests."

The department implements the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program under ORS 526.510 (1) *The State Forestry Department shall provide technical assistance to cities, counties, other governmental units, nonprofit and civic organizations and other groups interested in planting and caring for trees in communities.* The mission of the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program is to help Oregonians improve their quality of life by promoting community investment in our urban forests. The primary funding source for this program is federal funds through the USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry. The program provides periodic updates to the Board on its activities and trends and issues in urban forestry.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Long-time U&CF manager, Paul Ries, retired in July 2017, reducing the staffing of the U&CF program to 1.75 full-time equivalents (FTE), supported exclusively through federal funds. As federal funds have declined over the past decade, the U&CF program continues to adapt to find innovative ways to continue to deliver services. The program manager position has been taken on by Kristin Ramstad, who has worked for the U&CF program with Paul for over 25 years. This position serves as the point of contact for the federal-state partnership, coordinating all aspects of grant writing, grant administration, program delivery, performance accounting, and fiscal management. The program manager also contributes to educational program delivery, statewide program leadership, technical assistance, and volunteer coordination as time allows. One field Community Assistance Forester, Katie Lompa, (.75 FTE, federally funded) provides technical assistance, volunteer coordination, organizational assistance, and educational guidance to Oregon's 241 incorporated cities, 36 counties, multiple state agencies, colleges and universities, and around 100 non-profit or not-for-profit organizations (though not all of these are solely urban forestry related). A support staff position (.30 FTE, federally funded), a .2 FTE, other funded) public affairs staff position, and a temporary NRS1 position, round-out the U&CF team. Additionally, U&CF program outreach is increased by the efforts of Oregon Community Trees (OCT), Oregon's Urban and Community Forest Council. Comprised of educators and urban forestry professionals, with guidance, materials, and resources from the ODF urban forestry staff, OCT has sponsored and led half-day urban forestry workshops and other events in more remote areas of the state, enabling city staff to have more opportunities to learn about urban forestry, and far-flung ISA-certified arborists to acquire the credits required for their continued certification.

ODF has had a high-performing U&CF program since its start in 1991, producing as many as 600 assists per year (Attachment 1). In a typical year, the program reaches about 50% of Oregon's cities, encompassing 90% of Oregon's urban population (Attachment 2). ODF works with a handful of non-profit and community based organizations, including Friends of Trees in Portland, and municipal tree boards across the state. The program also provides assistance to other state agencies, including the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, which regularly consults with and even contracts with the U&CF program for tree advice and formal training.

Since 2008, a portion of federal urban forestry funds is allocated through a USDA Forest Service competitive grant program. The U&CF program has successfully completed or has in process the following Western Competitive Grant projects:

- *Best Management Practices to Reduce Forest Fragmentation During Development*, (in conjunction with Washington Department of Natural Resources), 2008.
- *Reducing Forest Fragmentation in Interface Forest Landscapes*, (in conjunction with OSU), 2009.
- *Online Urban Forestry & Urban-Rural Interface Forestry Technology Transfer*, (in conjunction with state forestry agencies in WA, AK, ID, and with OSU and PNW-ISA), 2010.
- *Linking People and Landscapes: Using Public Perceptions of Urban Forestry Services to Create New Management Strategies*, (in conjunction with OSU), 2011.
- *A Regional Urban Forestry Strategy for Portland/Vancouver* (ODF, in conjunction with Washington DNR and OSU), 2012.

- *The Oregon Forest Action Plan Mobility Project*, (in conjunction with OSU), 2013.
- *Green Infrastructure in Urban/Rural Interface Communities*, (in conjunction with OSU), 2014.
- *Greater Forest Park Ecosystem Restoration Project*, (in conjunction with West Multnomah Soil and Conservation District and The Forest Park Conservancy), 2016

Currently, ODF staff is finishing up the Green Infrastructure (GI) grant with its partner, OSU. Among the “deliverables” of this project are new Low Impact Development (LID) demonstrations in two small cities (Coos Bay and La Grande); a well-attended one two-day workshop in March (Coos Bay); a planned one-day workshop in October (La Grande); a free online modular Low Impact Development course via OSU’s PACE technology (available in the fall 2017); and an updated GI website with improved functionality and information for Low Impact Development technologies applicable to all regions of the state.

For the Greater Forest Park Ecosystem Restoration grant, the partners co-sponsored a one-day conference in May, featuring Doug Decker as the keynote. The purpose of the conference was to share information among cooperators, landowners, and non-profits on all of the restoration activities occurring in and around Forest Park and to build a spirit of collaboration between partners. West Multnomah SWCD and the Forest Park Conservancy continue to work with Forest Park landowners and stakeholders on invasive species removal, forest management, and fire preparedness.

At this Board of Forestry session, Board members will hear an update on how Department staff members are increasing program outreach with fewer staff and possibly reduced Federal funding in FY18. Additionally, with the threat of the (not yet detected) Emerald Ash Borer looming across the state, we will discuss U&CF strategies for helping cities prepare for this invasive and destructive pest. Finally, we focus on the urban trees and human health connection, and how this area of inquiry may facilitate new partnerships between the U&CF program and the health care industry.

RECOMMENDATION

This agenda item is for information only.

ATTACHMENTS

- (1) Oregon Department of Forestry Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program. Record of Technical Assistance Accomplishments, Federal Fiscal Years 1992-2016
- (2) Urban Forestry Accomplishment Data for Oregon - Trend Summary of CARS and State Measures. CARS Data Trend Summary for Oregon - 2005-2016