

WISCONSIN URBAN FORESTRY COUNCIL

September 7, 2012

UW- Stevens Point – Stevens Point, WI

In Attendance: Todd Chwala, Christopher Deegan, John DuPlissis, Marla Eddy, Mark Freberg, Dan Green, Leif Hubbard, Greg Kessler, Shirley Brabender-Mattox, Don Merkes, Art Ode, Ken Ottman, Dan Siewert, David Sivyer, Jordan Skiff, Blake Theisen, Jeff Treu, Kelli Tuttle, Les Werner, Kevin Westphal, Jeff Wolters.

Ex Officio members in attendance: Jill Johnson, Olivia Witthun, Laura Wyatt and Dick Rideout

Members Absent: Bruce Allison, Patti Dreier, Thomas Dunbar, John Gall, Thomas Landgraf, Terry Sime, Bryan Spencer.

DNR in attendance: Kimberly Miller, Jim Warren

Guests: Jim Calkins

1) Call to Order and Introduction

Kelli Tuttle

Kelli Tuttle called the meeting to order at 9:35am and welcomed new members and asked meeting participants to introduce themselves. Leif Hubbard moved to approve the 6/20/12 meeting minutes; seconded by Jeff Wolters.

2) The You in U.S. Forest Services

Jill Johnson

Jill Johnson introduced her role as the Midwest Urban Forestry Coordinator assigned to the USFS field office in Minneapolis. She services programs in seven Midwestern states. The USFS facilitates a cooperative urban forestry partnership with each state through support of three broad categories including: financial support, communications and development of educational resources and programs that benefit more than one state.

The portion of the USFS budget directed to urban forestry is approximately \$28 million with 2/3 going to state forestry programs and a portion awarded through competitive grant projects. Approximately 1/3 is applied toward regional and national initiatives such as the Arbor Day Foundation/Tree City USA program.

State allotments are based on performance, in part, through an annual state report of how many communities are managing/developing and the number of communities which have been assisted, including population. Four elements of managing include having professional/trained staff, having an urban forestry related ordinance, advocacy or advisory group and a plan. This collection of criteria is often referred to as SOAP. If a community completes all four they are considered managing. If a community meets more than one, they are considered developing. Every state gets a base amount to run an UF program, but they must support a full-time state coordinator, facilitate a partnership or volunteer coordination presence, have a UF program plan, and an advisory committee which is the role of the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council. The Farm Bill authorizes funding the forest service. The next Farm Bill will be reviewed in 2017 and will be taking a closer look at USFS programs, including urban forestry. It isn't too early to begin sharing the value of the UF program with our Congressional representatives.

Keeping the “U” in USFS. Jill encouraged members to seek answers; ask if you have questions. Convey your thoughts and opinions. Communicate with elected officials. Get and stay engaged with Council activities. Vote.

3) Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee (MNSTA)

Jim Calkins

Started in 1974, the Board of Directors serves as the UF Council for Minnesota. The organization holds two board meetings (primarily updates) and two general membership meetings each year, a monthly education forum (rotates around Minneapolis area) and produces an annual legislative report (printed with MDNR funds). First started as an advisory council to the MN Dept. of Ag with a historical connection to Dutch elm disease and has been highly visible. Constitution recently redone with elimination of committees, but formation of task forces. Starting strategic planning process. Many of their recent conversations focus on educating the general public and cultivating grass roots support to promote the value of trees and efforts to support urban forestry. Connecting to issues with stormwater and diversity.

MNSTA is composed of state agency reps, tree care advisors, UWM reps, a general membership (gets you on e-mail info. distribution list), arborists, UF stakeholders and more. UMN operates the annual March MN shade tree short course. MN state UF grant program made available through a one-time bonding bill. MNSTA is a collection of people/organizational representatives, and is not incorporated as an official organization.

4) Future Focus – Task Focus

Kelli Tuttle

In response to the DNR Strategic Direction, the UFCouncil has been examining its role. Advisory is mandated and will be continued, but work with additional issues, including diversity, trees & stormwater will be taken on over the next two years.

The UFCouncil divided into working groups to complete the action planning sheets which were started at the June. During lunch action plans were copied and each group reported-out.

There is no specified funding for these projects, although there are a variety of sources which the UFCouncil could explore.

ACTION: Issue groups are to refine their plans during Sept.-Oct. and distribute to the entire UFCouncil for comment during mid-Oct. Final plans will be presented at the November meeting for adoption.

Advisory:

Ken Ottman, Patty Dreier, Leif Hubbard, Les Werner and Tom Landgraf, David Sivyer, Dan Siewert, Christopher Deegan, John DuPlissis and Dick Rideout (DNR)

DNR will be developing new strategies and targets for new Strategic Direction. The UFC Advisory Committee will; 1st) review and approve the DNR UF 5 year plan, 2nd) advise on selection of the metrics, review and advise on the annual and future work plans, review and advise on goals and objectives through annual outcome report (which should be available on a quarterly basis).

Trees & Stormwater

Greg Kessler, Jordan Skiff, Shirley Mattox, Blake Theisen, Don Merkes, Jeff Treu, Kelli Tuttle, Tom Dunbar, Laura Wyatt (DNR), Secondary –Kevin Westpahl

Committee will be assessing WI stormwater rules and regulations. Develop and administer a survey of allied professions and communities regarding what they are currently doing through codes and regulations. End goal for state water regulatory agencies to provide credit for adding green space and tree planting. Identify research gaps needed to assist regulatory agencies that trees/open space do provide benefit. Compile state regulations, educate UFC and define future steps.

Tress & Diversity:

Jeff Wolters, Dan Traas, Marla Eddy, Art Ode, Mark Freberg, Todd Chwala, Dan Green, Bryan Spencer, Olivia Witthun (DNR), Secondary –Dan Siewert

Working with municipalities, open lines of communication and identify wants and needs and what nurseries can supply. Also expand audience to include architects and contractors. Planting contract compliance also needs attention. Work through linkedin, Define diversity so it is easily understood, and present a consistent message. Add more partners to get broader lines of communication. Follow planting guidelines of DNR.

6) Community Canopy Model Definition

Olivia Witthun shared a canopy model definition which had been developed by DNR UF staff. With the new strategic direction, DNR UF staff will be shifting focus from a street tree view (primarily public trees) to a canopy level (encompassing both public and private trees). DNR will work with an increasing number of community canopy partners to help identify what is present, what is needed (desired) and facilitate work with a community on moving toward a community set goal. Olivia shared examples.

David Sivyer emphasized the value of educating public on tree benefits, such as stormwater. Consider pooling grant money to address bigger issues, creating successful models which can be replicated. Need to get citizens engaged. Jordan Skiff shared the value of having residents provide personal testimonies regarding tree benefits and impact of losses. Art Ode asked who would determine the desired canopy for a community. Communities will determine and set their own goals.

7) NER Regional UF Value Info Sheets

Kimberly Miller, DNR NER Urban Forestry reviewed the project she has been working on with Tracy Salisbury. Kim has utilized i-Tree software to compile tree benefit information for 7 NER communities. Eventually fact sheets will be created for 17 communities within the NER, but only as a pilot. The information in the fact sheets can help communities recognize how they might utilize trees to meet their goals & objectives

established through Smart Growth and regional planning. The information also can be used to support non-profits tree planting programs, and provide baseline data necessary to measure change. Many communities feel it will help educate decision makers and build program support. Communities will be surveyed on how they have utilized the fact sheets.

Mark Freberg has used the fact sheets to orientate a new parks & rec director on the value of Green Bay trees and has plans to share with the full parks committee, full council, and area legislators. Jim Warren suggested agricultural lands be classified marginal or productive so it doesn't appear we are advocating to plant trees on all ag lands.

Setting a community canopy goals is a gap within the currently available tools/project. This has been identified nationally and folks are looking for guidance on how best should communities set a canopy goal. DNR will need to determine its role.

David Sivyer shared a Milwaukee application where they take canopy imagery and place a GIS layer, over parcel map and can identify plant able locations, block by block or by neighborhood and are able to set realistic goals, based on available green space. This could start a movement to specifically establish set benefits and influence behavior based on need instead of public relations.

8) Advocating the value of the urban forest

Municipal governments across the state are preparing budgets and most are facing difficult times due to declining values impacting levy limits and a loss of shared revenue. Don Merkes lead a discussion on strategies communities are using to support continued investment in the UF resource? Menasha is partnering with corporations with an interest in reducing their carbon foot print, fundraising, expanding community involvement through programs in schools and with neighborhood groups which results in advocates. The message of value to residents is presented to the council. Some communities are shifting forestry costs to the storm water budget. Madison is looking at levy limits and if EAB related expenses can be consider emergency management or hardship expenses? Todd Chwala utilized an UF grant to complete an inventory which he related to the *Trees Pay Us Back* information and presented tree benefit information to council members. Jordan Skiff approached the council with urban forestry/EAB related planning information/needs at a time when it isn't budget crunch time and topics are less controversial, he has also taken advantage of housing authority community block grants funds for beautification of blighted neighborhoods. Many communities are moving tree planting into capital projects. Benefits of trees are often considered intuitive and an effort to focus attention on the true value of the environmental services they provide is needed to enable citizens to best advocate for this resource. A break-out session at the annual conference focused on how communities are funding their UF program during these tough budgetary times was suggested.

Action: Kelli will bring this to the attention of the Annual Conference planning committee.

9.) DNR Update

Jim Warren, thanked the UFCouncil members for their participation. The Urban Forestry program is housed within the Division of Forestry, Bureau of Forest Management and Public and Private Forestry Section. Dick Rideout is currently on special assignment. His former position has been transformed into a team leader position with supervisory responsibilities for all UF staff. Interviews for this new position will occur in October with hiring in Nov./Dec. The Patnrnership and Grant Coordinator positions have not be moved to priority level for filling. Forestry has ability to fill 90% of vacancies.

Urban Forest Inventory project has completed the collection of field data. Next step is data analysis which will be done by the Forest Research station headed-up by David Nowak.

The UF business plan submitted to the Council on Forestry by Bruce Allison has been approved. The plan identified targets or outcomes for the UF program which the DNR UF will report on.

Olivia Witthun thanked council members for their involvement in CTMI graduation. A quarterly report of regional activity was shared. Please contact Olivia or identified regional coordinators with questions.

10) Open Mic

David Sivyer – Milwaukee is conducting a study to quantify the ecosystem benefits lost over the last 55 years as a result of Dutch elm disease. It is hope this report will provide a better understanding of the impact of invasives.

Jeff Treu-UF awards committee chair encouraged UFC members to promote and nominate UF projects for the UFCouncil award program. There are five categories including: distinguished service, lifetime achievement, elected official distinguished service, innovations in urban forestry, and project partnerships. Please visit the UFCouncil webpage at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/UrbanForests/awards.html> for additional information. Nomination deadline is Dec. 30. The award committee is looking for several additional members.

Dick – With the ISA conference in Milwaukee in 2014, Dick is planning route for the Tour des Trees and looking for partners and sponsors. The 500+ bike ride will begin in Milwaukee, head to Manitowoc, sneak through Door County on the way to Green Bay and then head south to Stevens Point, the Dells and Madison and then back to Milwaukee.

Shirley, reminded all that we are sometimes asking people to make valued based decision and that can take time. The “green belt” in England, a project of Henry the 8th took hundreds of years to build and still is a topic of discussion. It takes work every day.

Meeting adjourned: 3:35pm

NEXT meeting: November 2 in Madison