

Introduction

This report summarizes the goals, planning, background, and accomplishments of the 1997 Northeast Pennsylvania Urban Forestry Program. The foundation of this program is that the health of a community's forest and ecological systems is directly related to the community's social and economic health and well-being. The goal of the program was to demonstrate how the management of urban areas as ecological systems supports citizen participation in activities that provide ecological, social, and economic benefits.

The 1997 Northeast Pennsylvania Urban Forestry Program expanded and improved on the accomplishments of the 1995 Program in providing grant funds and technical assistance to communities pursuing the management of their natural resources. It was an initiative funded by the USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry, Northeastern Area, under Michael Rains, Area Director. The Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania directed the program, providing administrative and technical assistance. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR), Bureau of Forestry supported the program by providing technical assistance, forest health assessment, and education.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, key organizations in Northeastern Pennsylvania had developed significant planning documents in preparation for the economic and social revitalization of the region. Partnerships with these organizations contributed to the implementation of their well-conceived plans for improved regional health by integrating natural resources improvements with existing cultural and economic planning.

Over 290 diverse partners came together to complete the 21 urban forestry-based projects funded in 1997. The variety of groups represented ensured the projects addressed ecological concerns, business interests and social issues important to the region.

Partners supporting the Northeast Pennsylvania Urban Forestry Program contributed financial support, technical and professional expertise, labor, volunteers, and educational activities. These partnerships strengthened working relationships among public, private, federal, state, and local agencies.

The need to address the decline of mature street trees in small communities across the region resulted in a new grant category, Tree Liability and Assessment. This category addressed a regional problem by providing technical and financial resources for the assessment, remediation, and renewal of aging street tree populations.

The planting and management of strip mine areas and parks, highway beautification, river corridor restoration, riparian buffer plantings, management of noxious vegetation, and hazardous tree remediation are examples of projects undertaken by the grantees. These projects have triggered economic renewal efforts and social opportunities for local citizens. Sustainable natural resources management has proven to be a vital step towards economic renewal and the involved cooperation of the community.

This report includes a brief regional history to help readers understand the framework behind the natural resource issues addressed by the program. The Project Profile section provides brief summaries of accomplishments, budget documentation, and program partners for each project. The last section of the report, Program Summaries, provides tables that illustrate overall program accomplishments.

We trust this report will inspire and assist other programs and promote partnership building to ensure the wise use of natural resources in all communities.

