

February 8, 2010

URBAN FORESTRY COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS - 2009

John T. Gall, WAA Representative

March 11th Meeting

Report on State Budget and Impacts on Urban Forestry

- Impacts for the balance of the biennium included: cutting two FTE positions in December (which ones are yet to be determined.) Closure of service centers. MFL Public Access grant program, Fire Department training grants and Urban Forestry grant funds have been eliminated. County Forest grants have been cut in half and Wisconsin Land Owner Grant Program was partially cut. None of the 300 current vacancies in DNR will be filled. The Governor's goal is that the state will carry 3500 vacancies throughout the biennium. The hope is that there won't be need for layoffs but there are no guarantees at this time.

Wisconsin's Statewide Forest Assessment

- This assessment which is due to be finished in 2010 is produced once every ten years. A draft will be ready for review in summer 2009. Once complete the data will be used to identify threats and develop strategies to address those threats.

May 8th Meeting

Urban Forestry Funding

- UF Assistance grant funds were put back in the budget with a 1 percent cut; however the tree planting initiative didn't receive any funding. The council needs to identify a plan of action and next steps.

20x2020-Progress

- The initiative didn't receive any funding from the state in spite of what appeared to be strong support among a number of different agencies. With the lack of funding at the state level is this a project that we want to continue with? Alternative options for moving forward were presented. The plan is to start with a small system that can be used to gain momentum for the initiative.

- Create a logo and graphic piece that would help brand the initiative; a web site that would serve as a location for information and resources; and developing displays that promote the benefits of trees.
- The Natural Resources Foundation is interested in working with a “model community”.
- DNR UF Group has resources in budget (as it stands now) and staff time that could be allocated toward this project.
- The website and program would initially focus on engaging entities that are already involved in sustainability. Groups that are already established and have an audience.

Urban Invasive BMP project

- An outline of the manual and appendices, plus highlighted recent decisions was shared with the UF Council.
 - The manual will be put out for public comment mid-June through mid-July via internet.
 - Definition of invasives has been determined.
 - There will be a priority list for insects and diseases based on the most destructive not the most common.
 - There will not be a plant list included but the appendix will list resources where plant lists can be found. Reasoning was that no plant list can suit everyone’s needs.
 - Aquatics and earthworms have been excluded.
 - The BMPs will be repeated in different chapters so chapters can stand alone.

August 21st Meeting

WI UF Best Management Practices for Preventing Invasives

- Project originated from the UF council identifying invasives as one of the major issues being faced throughout the state.
- WI is the first state in the nation to undertake a project like this and it will be used as a model for other states.
- Council can assist in implementation by integrating these BMP’s in their daily practices as professionals in the field. Look for opportunities to use in conjunction with existing systems such as management plans and surveys.

Emerald Ash Borer

- EAB found in traps in Crawford, Brown & Kenosha Counties this summer.
- In Crawford/Vernon Co. an 84,000 acre management zone has been established. DNR foresters are working with property owners in the area. Infested and risk trees will be taken down.

- In Brown Co. an aerial survey will be done. Any crown dieback noted will be reexamined from the ground.
- The Kenosha find is 5 miles from a heavy infestation in IL and near an area that accepted yard waste from IL until the quarantine was imposed, so more finds are likely.
- Wasp bio-surveillance was conducted this summer in Door County, Newburg and Victory to see if this is a viable tool in WI.
- Brown & Kenosha County quarantines will go into effect tomorrow. The Federal quarantine for those areas will take another 3-5 weeks to go into effect.
- Ash Management Guidelines:
 - Document currently exists in outline form. It has gone out for review and comment. Dick Rideout will work on reformatting and the final structure based on comments received.
 - The guidelines will be available as an electronic document only, so they can be updated as the EAB situation changes and as we learn better ways to manage ash resources.
 - Content will be based on experiences that have taken place in states that are further ahead in dealing with infestations.
 - Guidelines will not be mandates but will share the most current management processes

DNR Budget and Forestry Division Update

- Division of Forestry hasn't released the exact cuts being taken yet, but \$1.6 million have been identified and will affect several forestry programs.
- Two management positions that needed to be cut have been identified. South Central and South East Regions will be combined. The Bureau Director position for the Office of Sciences was eliminated.
- Darryl Zastrow will be the new Deputy Forester.
- In the Forestry Division redesign of the central office, Urban Forestry falls under Private and Community Forestry Section Chief. This section also contains the Forest Tax Law program which is very large. Some concern that UF, Private Forestry and Stewardship could get lost in the shuffle.
- Section chiefs have not been appointed to the redesign positions yet. Hope to know those by the end of September as well as a timeline for implementation.
- Council members questioned the heavy use of LTE positions within the division and whether FTE position would provide more consistency. Discussion on differences in pay and benefits that make LTE more affordable.
- Grant funds have been put on a biennium basis so if they have not all been used at the end of the first year they can be carried over the second year rather than going back to the general fund.
- Format for the fall workshops has changed. Workshops will replicate the October 20 workshop being held in West Bend. There will be one workshop per region in fall of 2009 or spring of 2010.

November 6th Meeting

NR-40 (Invasives) What is it and what does it mean for urban forestry

- Species are categorized as restricted or prohibited. Restricted species are those that are already present and “control” is the objective. Prohibited are species not yet present and the goal is prevention. Regulation states that no person may transport, possess, transfer or introduce a prohibited species without a permit.
 - Initial focus will be on education, early detection and control and less on enforcement.
 - Guidance documents are being developed to train staff and partners.
 - A website has been developed but is not currently maintained/updated due to lack of staff.
 - Transporting for identification, control or disposal can be done without a permit if reasonable precautions are taken. It is not intended to be a violation if it is determined to be incidental or the person took reasonable precautions.
 - Wardens have the authority to issue citations but the decision regarding whether to do so will be determined by a “review group.” Each violation will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
 - A few states have similar legislation but none offer a very close comparison. There is evidence however, that education is successful in slowing and preventing the spread of invasives.

Wisconsin Statewide Forest Assessment

- Wisconsin’s Statewide Forest Assessment 2010 describes the status of Wisconsin’s forest resources on both public and private lands, and both rural and urban landscapes. The report is based on the structure established in Wisconsin’s Forest Sustainability Framework. Using the Framework as a guide, the Assessment presents seven major criteria of sustainability, and data to assess the sustainability of the forests in Wisconsin. The Assessment does not set desired conditions; rather it provides the knowledge to set goals and strategies for sustainability.
- Once completed, the Assessment will provide policymakers and the general public with a database of succinct, comprehensive, and scientifically sound data on forests. Major conclusions drawn from this report will be used to craft the next Statewide Forest Plan, which will guide the work of the Division of Forestry and partners over coming years

Urban Forestry Grants

- The 2010 grant year is underway. Grant requests received were just over \$834,000 and just over \$600,000 was awarded.

- Fifteen start-up grants were funded compared to 8 last year.
- Funding for the grants is a biennial appropriation this year. In the past it has been an annual appropriation.
- Funds in the amount of \$208,000 have been reserved for catastrophic storm grants. There are no storm grant applications at this time.

Budget Reporting

- Federal Budget Support-
 - Federal bills in the house and senate contain specific UF components. There is recognition of the role UF can play in climate change at a federal level.
 - Federal budget includes a 2.8% increase for the state and private forestry program which includes urban forestry and may result in WI receiving a higher allotment than last year.
 - The possibility of UF being awarded unspent stimulus funds has been blocked. Debates resulted in a change in the language of the appropriations act but the heading remained “Wildland Fire” which essentially prohibits funds from going to UF.
- State Budget Reduction-
 - Due to budget cuts, vacancies and furloughs it’s necessary to identify activities within DNR-Forestry that won’t be conducted for awhile.
 - UF budget was cut \$40,000.
 - Some UF activities will need to be foregone. Those items are still being identified.
- Biennial State Budget Process-
 - The Council’s tree planting initiative was positively received within the agency, legislature, Doyle administration & Natural Resources Board. However, when it became necessary to cut additional amounts from the state budget the initiative forwarded by the NRB was dropped.
 - Global Warming Task Force Initiative: a bill is currently being drafted. At this time it appears that items in the initiative with a significant “price-tag” will not be included in the bill.
 - Anticipating further reductions in the next budget, DNR-Forestry is in the process of evaluating their programs. These internal assessments as well as the statewide assessment will be complete next year and will be used to identify priorities. Vacant positions can then be used to place staff where the needs are greatest.