



Urban & Community Forestry Council



Meeting Minutes

Location: Hybrid meeting

Date: March 21, 2024

Roll call

Present for the Council (council):

- Asia Downtin
- Heather Griffin
- Paul Hickman
- Tyler Klifman
- Lee Mueller
- Doug Schultz
- Alec Smith
- Gerry Santoro

Present for the DNR Staff (department)

- Grace Bianchi
- Kerry Gray
- Kevin Sayers
- Lawrence Sobson
- Jeff Stampfly (State Forester)
- Andrea Stay
- Sue Tangora

Others Present

- Lisa Perez (USDA Forest Service)

Call to Order: 9:25 A.M.

Approval of Agenda:

Amendments: Mueller suggested moving directly to introductions, DNR UCF Program Report and UCF/IRA Grants Update while waiting for quorum.

Motion to approve: Schultz

Support: Griffin

Vote: Approved unanimously

Approval of Minutes of October 31, 2023 meeting:

Amendments: None

Motion to approve: Schultz

Support: Hickman

Vote: Approved unanimously

DNR Program and Staffing Report

- Program growth and reorganization since fall meeting

- New UCF unit created under Forest Health and Cooperative Forestry Program (FHCP) Section.
- Sayers promoted to unit manager position maintaining role and responsibilities as the program coordinator but now supervising program staff (currently 2, planning for 3).
- Kerry Gray hired as the IRA Grant Specialist for UCF program. Limited-term.
- Sobson position being updated from limited-term to full-time permanent.
- Planning to post announcement for new regional UCF forester this spring.
- Annual UCF program report being drafted. Anticipate publishing by end of April.
- GIS staff being hired to focus on CHFCP programs. Funding is from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation (BIL) for state forest action plan implementation.

Committee Reports:

Grants (*K Gray - chair, Downtin, Schultz, Sayers*)

- With Gray joining DNR staff, chair position is currently vacant.
- Discussion about role of committee and chair responsibilities.
- Consensus was that DNR (Gray) could serve as chair, to be determined by committee.
- Schultz and Hickman request to be added as committee members.

Action item(s):

- Gray will convene next meeting at which time group will discuss and determine who will chair the committee.

Forest Health (*Kruise - chair*)

- Kruise absent due to meeting conflict – no chair report
- Tangora provided some updates on various forest health news from FHCP including:
 - Status of new and existing Hemlock Woolly Adelgid infestations in Michigan
 - Status of Balsam Woolly Adelgid infestation in Michigan
 - Reminder of Oak Wilt high risk (April 15-July 15) and related guidance
- Governor's proclamation announcing May as Oak Wilt Awareness month in progress
- Downtin requested council input/advice for her to draft letter for MUCFC to submit MSU Forestry and College of Agriculture and Natural Resources to advocate for replacing Dr. Monique Sakalidis's position with a new Plant Health Care/Arborist position in Forestry
- Schultz motioned to approve Dr. Downtin's request with support from Griffin. The vote carried unanimously.

Action item(s):

- Dr. Downtin to draft letter for Chair Mueller to submit to MSU on behalf of MUCFC.

Advocacy (*Vacant - Chair, Griffin, Foen, Hickman, Sayers*)

- With no acting chair, there was not committee report.
- Discussion related to committee role, origin and next steps.
- Council members generally support maintaining the committee with Griffin

- organizing a meeting to discuss further.
- Sobson request to be added as committee member.

Action item(s):

- *Griffin will organize meeting to discuss future of committee*

Data (*Dowtin – chair, Sayers, K. Gray, Klifman*)

- Dowtin absent during this portion of agenda – no chair report
- Discussion of importance to connect UCF program data and data/analysis needs with new DNR GIS position being hired for CFHCP focus.
- Some of DNR's IRA funding will be allocated to help develop a program data dashboard to facilitate management and dissemination of data.
- Need for UCF data and data analysis is high as evidenced by last Forest Action Plan process where this was lacking.
- Perez shared that the first full cycle of Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis (UFIA) data has been collected for Detroit and will be available later this year or next.

Action item(s):

- *Dowtin is still looking for someone to take over chair of this committee (possibly DNR?)*

Michigan Arbor Day Alliance (*Lancour – chair, Sayers, Kruse, Stay*)

- Lancour absent due to work conflict with new job– no chair report
 - She may or may not be able to continue on council due to new job.
 - Postponed Arbor Day/Tree City event to 2025
- DNR staff have recently developed and are promoting an online [Arbor Day event map and survey](#) to solicit public input of upcoming Arbor Day events.
- DNR staff and AmeriCorps member are putting together Arbor Day promotional packets and information to distribute at events and for schools and will be participating in multiple Arbor and Earth Day events in mid-Michigan during April
- DNR staff working on stories to showcase events and articles for Arbor Day/tree planting media blitz in April.
- Reminder for members to promote the [MI Trees campaign](#) and encourage adding tree plantings to the [MI Trees map](#) this spring.

Action item(s):

- *Lancour will notify Sayers about ongoing status with council and as chair for Arbor Day*

Items for Discussion:

UCF and IRA Grants Program (Sayers/Gray)

- Community Forestry Grant (Core funded) and IRA funded grant opportunities were combined for the FY24 program year.
 - 18 total awards made (10 CFG ~ \$200K and 8 IRA ~ \$250K)
 - MI was the first state to award grants using IRA funding

- Intentionally limited first round of IRA awards to slowly get program issues clarified and worked out.
- Plan is for 2 more rounds of IRA funding starting summer 2024
- Development of complete IRA grant RFP underway and based on information and examples from other state's grants.
- Core funded grant program will return to stand-alone program in FY25
- DNR moving UCF and IRA grants to a new grants management system being developed under the department's MI Grants system umbrella.
 - Associated costs for developing this will be from IRA funding. Goal is to streamline process, improve engagement and user experience.
 - Anticipated roll-out of new system is late 2024.
- DNR staff will work with the Grants committee and others to gather input, advice and ideas on best practices for developing and administering UCF program grants:
 - preapplication, webinars
 - technical assistance on applying for grants
 - gathering and sharing success stories
 - registering for state and federal grants and payments

Action item(s):

- *Sayers, Gray and Stay will work with Grants committee and others to develop next round of grants including the grants management system.*

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Grant Recipient Engagement (Mueller)

- Follow-up on topic of convening meeting with Michigan's eleven grant recipients of federal IRA funding to coordinate and facilitate discussions, networking and improve project outcomes.
 - Discussion confirmed that this fits with role of council as a convener to conversation with stakeholders. Affirmative vote for this action was taken during the October 31, 2023 meeting.
 - Initial goal is to bring Michigan's IRA grant recipients together to hear introductions, individual project overviews, networking and general question and answer and surface level conversations.
 - Engagement and coordination with USFS will occur once their regional IRA grant coordinator is hired and announced.
 - Questions:
 - In-person or virtual?
 - USFS direct recipients only or include DNR IRA grant recipients?
 - When?
 - IRA Grantee Engagement subcommittee formed to further discuss and plan and organize towards this goal.
 - Members: Mueller, Gray, Griffin, Perez

Action item(s):

- *Subcommittee needs to meet, identify a chair and coordinate plans for convening meeting with IRA grant recipients.*

Alliance for Community Trees (ACT) Membership (Sayers)

- [Alliance for Community Trees](#) (ACT) approached state UCF councils in early 2024 to offer 1yr free membership to incentivize development of a state UCF council workgroup and facilitate networking
- Discussion provided information about ACT, existing members (MI and national) and recognized the potential benefits and noted no significant downside.
- With strong support, members encouraged acceptance of this offer for 1yr. free membership to ACT and revisiting the issue to consider future annual renewal (est. cost to DNR UCF program - \$125) at the fall meeting.
 - Motion to approve: Schultz
 - Support: Griffin
 - Vote: Approved unanimously

Action item(s):

- *Sayers will confirm offer acceptance with ACT and work with Mueller to complete any required membership registration as needed.*

FY23 Federal Community Accomplishment Report (CARS)

- Sayers provided update for FY23 MI UCF CARS report
 - Overall, for FY23, % of Managing communities decreased and % Developing increased, likely due to:
 - Ongoing efforts by DNR UCF staff to verify accuracy of local CARS metrics (i.e. plans, ordinance, staff, board) to ensure compliance with updated federal CARS definitions. This has resulted in a decrease in some areas.
 - Annual reversion of some communities from Managing to Developing status as a result of change in status of local CARS metrics (e.g. outdated plans [10yr+], loss of staff, board, etc.
 - Looking at implementing an annual municipal CARS survey to improve data collection and record keeping.
- Overall DNR UCF program assistance increased by ~100K to nearly 5.4 M
 - Largely due to efforts of new additional staff (Sobson).
- Financial Assistance increased significantly for second year in row:
 - FY22 increase largely due to State Urban Forest Resilience grant (~\$500K) subawarded to American Forests to support Detroit Tree Equity Partnership (DTEP)
 - FY23 increase due to award of \$7.5 million in IRA funding

Action item(s):

- *None*

Forest Action Plan (FAP) Stakeholder meeting (Stay)

- Provided background on FAP and update on recent annual stakeholder meeting held on March 12th in Grayling

- Good participation from stakeholders
- Overview provided by USFS and Northeast Midwest State Forestry Alliance staff.
- Combination of DNR staff/program and partner updates with focus tied to federal investments of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation (BIL) funding.
- Lessons learned (shorter/fewer presentations, more focus on engagement, consider engaging with large private landowners and other audiences we may be missing)
- Internal DNR team meeting to discuss next steps with planning future stakeholder engagement sessions and goal of producing required update for 2025 report.

Action item(s):

- *DNR staff will communicate ongoing progress and efforts related to FAP*

MUCFC Membership Update and Recruitment (Mueller/Sayers)

- Update on status of membership and including expiring terms:
 - Current voting membership: 12
 - Dowtin, Mueller, Foen, Griffin and vacant position expire at fall 2024 meeting
 - All are eligible to renew for new 3 year term.
 - Mueller indicates he does not intend to renew after this term.
 - Chair (Mueller) and Vice Chair (Griffin) terms expire at fall 2024 meeting.
 - Mueller indicates he does not intend to renew after this term.
- Reminder of new MUCFC Member Handbook developed and approved at last meeting.
 - Current membership does not include a number of key constituencies as listed in the handbook (e.g. nursery, tribal, utility). Future membership should seek to fill those gaps.
 - Work could take place in the advocacy committee to produce targeted recruitment of members in these areas.
- Mueller has had some expressed interest in council membership by member of the public from Grand Haven with some background in natural areas work.
 - Building a list of interested prospective candidates would be good.

Action item(s):

- *Members with expiring terms should notify Sayers of intent to renew or not by October 1.*
- *Members should seek to identify and share prospective interested individuals to fill gaps in desired stakeholder representation areas.*

Tree City USA (Sobson)

- Provided update and infographic on status of 2023 Michigan Tree City USA program.
 - Total: 119
 - Total Expenses: 39,726,364
 - Total Population of Michigan: 35%
 - Per Capita: \$11.25
 - Planted: 27,638
- Provided update of Arbor Day Foundation's ongoing effort to develop new

recommendations and guidance for Standard 2 (Tree Ordinance). 3 pathways to achieve standard:

- 1. Same as current standard
- 2. Allows for certain types of qualifying land development ordinances
- 3. Allows for certain other qualifying municipal ordinances and policies

Action item(s):

- *Sobson and Sayers will include final 2023 numbers in UCF annual program report*
- *Sobson and Sayers will make sure all award materials are distributed as soon as they are received, - mid- April.*

Public Comment:

- None

Staff Communications:

- Gray
 - Provided update on IRA grants
 - Suggested further discussion needed (next council meeting) for possible addition of grantee requirements to use ISA Certified Arborist on tree maintenance funded grant projects.
- Sayers
 - Commended Dr. Dowtin for her [recent appointment](#) to the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC)
 - Reminded members of several upcoming events (e.g. [MI Healthy Climate Conference](#), [International Society of Arboriculture](#), [Partners in Community Forestry](#)).
 - Suggested possible agenda topic for future council meeting: *Formal position and recommendation on issue of flower pear trees*
 - Notified recently of changes in DTE Foundation point of contact for tree planting grant partnership. Unsure of future commitments but will announce next rounds later this summer.
- Sobson
 - Has been presenting at several events and conferences with focus on tree planting, selection and species diversity. .
 - Participated with Mueller on recent meeting with Univ. of Michigan faculty, students on tree protection ordinance best practices guidance.
 - Suggested possible creation of ad hoc committee to review/update [DNR's Recommended Trees for Community Plantings resource](#)
- Stay
 - Project Learning Tree (PLT) engagement and training events are helping expand program reach in Wexford Co. and Detroit – 19 new facilitators trained.
 - Held successful event (March 16 – Detroit) on [Black Faces in Green Spaces](#):

[The Journeys of Black Professionals in Green Careers](#). Very well-received and attended.

- Working with DNR Parks and Recreation and Forestry staff to design and update forestry related displays and exhibits at Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) in Detroit.
- Assisted with recent School Forest webinars with Mike Smalligan (DNR Forest Stewardship) and other states
- Visit [website](#) to find out more and keep up with events and happenings

Member Communications:

- Mueller
 - Provided update on recent/ongoing meetings regarding municipal tree protection ordinances and related legal challenges (e.g. Canton Township) with goal of creating best management practices as guidance for communities. More to come.
 - Having some initial discussion with other Midwest state UCF council chairs about interest in future collaboration.
 - Reminded members of new Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) UCF credential and encouraged council to review and help raise awareness among Michigan network.
- Klifman
 - Described recent project utilizing Climate Pollution Reduction Grant funding that allowed considerations for expanding urban tree canopy, esp. in disadvantaged areas as defined by federal CEJST tool.
 - Noted that SEMCOG received Erb Foundation funding to support furtherance of green initiatives programs.
- Griffin
 - Described how City of Flint uses/relies on ACT 51 (state transportation) funding to support a variety of eligible forestry activities/operations.
 - Described how the city is using federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to address tree-related sidewalk replacement issues.
 - Noted that the city's 2015 urban forest plan needs to be updated (e.g. species list outdated) and will be looking at ways to fund that.
- Santoro
 - Shared Green Macomb update and interest in conducting a comparative analysis of urban tree canopy (using NAIP and LIDAR imagery) to identify changes since initial 2010 data was collected.
 - Described successful example of innovative/adaptive stormwater management using green infrastructure in Macomb Co. (Mound Rd.) and how it has led to significant interest from other communities.
 - Seeking funding opportunities to support both initiatives.
- Hickman
 - Having conversations with 2 state legislators on creating state policies related to urban wood utilization
 - Provided electronic files/handouts outlining MI urban wood utilization initiative along with slides for members to review and plan for further discussion

- Update on Ann Arbor urban wood utilization effort becoming the first official circular wood triconomy program in Michigan (significant use of oak wilt killed trees in Burt Hills area).
- Similar municipal efforts being initiated in Gran Rapids and Traverse City
- National Urban Wood Network has Michigan representative (Jennifer Flynn – SEEDS) on steering committee
- Would like to see DNR's website updated to increase awareness/support for urban wood utilization topic.

Next Meeting: Summer - TBD and Fall - October 28

Adjournment: 12:03 PM

Respectfully submitted: Kevin Sayers