

Michigan Urban and Community Forestry Council



An advisory committee to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources

December 3, 2021

Mr. Jeff Stampfly, State Forester
Michigan Department of Natural Resources Forest Resources Division
PO Box 30452
Lansing, MI 48909

Mr. Stampfly,

Forests are a vital element in our urban environment providing millions of dollars of economic, social and environmental benefits. In the past year, our world, country and state have dealt with many new and unique challenges including the ongoing pandemic, climate change, political transition and social unrest. The important role and need for trees and nature, especially in urban and community areas has never been more recognized

While the need for trees has grown, funding for community trees has remained limited over the past decade. Fortunately, the current federal administration appears poised to address this need through legislation like the recently passed federal infrastructure bill and the pending Build Back Better legislation. With municipal and community leadership and the updated State of Michigan Forest Action Plan, urban and community forestry (UCF) programs can plan to begin replacing the trees and acres of urban tree canopy lost due to a myriad of issues, in the near future.

In support of this effort, the Michigan Urban and Community Forestry Council (MUCFC) works to improve urban and community forests by disseminating information and education through collaboration with partners and leveraging resources to support community efforts statewide. While the council provides support and guidance to the DNR's Urban and Community Forestry program, we also initiate discussions, engage stakeholders, build partnerships, and spread awareness of the immense value that trees provide to our built and urbanizing communities.

In 2021, the MUCFC supported the efforts of the Michigan UCF program which reported the following accomplishments:

- Participated in the state's process for updating the 10 yr. Forest Action Plan
- Hosted 1st new engagement event - Coffee with the State Forester
- Hosted annual Tree City USA awards banquet
- Revised application and process for the Community Forestry Grant Program
- Advocated for increasing the DNR's UCF program staffing as a priority in the Forest Action Plan

- Achieved a new record number (128) of communities certified as Tree City USA in Michigan
- Sponsored grants that facilitated the planting of 4,842 trees in urban and community areas
- Facilitated the contribution of 10,533 hours of volunteer labor on UCF projects
- Provided UCF program assistance to communities where 5.3M citizens live
- Reported 68 communities as “Managing” and 202 as “Developing” to USDA Forest Service

The MUCFC recognizes that the strategies outlined in the State's forest action plan will help monitor long term trends, establish priorities, and track progress in community forestry efforts. To these ends, we must identify, analyze and incorporate appropriate data to create local and statewide strategies that protect, enhance, and expand urban forests.

Additionally, we encourage the DNR to consider increased funding for urban forest management and replanting at the municipal level. Activities in local communities need to be data-driven, community - based and compliant with current best practices. The State and its partners can help provide tools that assist local communities in better managing their urban forests - from tree planting and maintenance to preservation.

With these goals in mind, MUCFC members are excited by the possibilities in 2022 to continue Michigan's urban and community forestry progress. Our members will support the State's efforts through several key priorities:

- support the federal and state urban and community forestry programs;
- host the annual Michigan Tree City USA program and awards event;
- promote Michigan, the DNR and MSU Forestry as leaders in urban and community forestry;
- strengthen geographic and cultural diversity among committee membership;
- help implement actions that address UCF goals and strategies in the State's forest action plan;
- evaluate and prioritize strategies (e.g. grants, technology, outreach) to build local capacity for planning and management of all urban and community forests;
- foster partnerships and conversations around key urban and community forestry issues in Michigan such as oak wilt, tree protection ordinances, arborist training, career-focused education to promote and attract diverse forestry leaders for the future;
- disseminate timely and relevant information on emerging issues in UCF to stakeholders; and
- maintain networks and connections to regional/state councils and national partners in UCF

We are encouraged by the heightened interest in urban and community forestry and anticipate new opportunities to leverage the knowledge, dedication and partnership between the DNR's UCF program and MUCFC to strengthen Michigan's role as a leader in this field. The MUCFC looks forward to continued engagement with you and the DNR's Forest Resources Division in the year ahead.

Sincerely,



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