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- Science Corner
- The Use of Nominal Groups
- Connecting with Youth

Mayor's Symposium on Community Trees and the Urban Forest in Tampa, Florida

By Dr. Michael G. Andreu and Melissa H. Friedman
UF – School of Forest Resources and Conservation, GCREC – Plant City Campus

On June 19, the *Mayor's Symposium on Community Trees and the Urban Forest* was held at the convention center in downtown Tampa, Florida. Over 160 city administrators, foresters, arborists, business groups, and citizen activists participated in this half-day event co-sponsored by the **City of Tampa**, **University of Florida**, **University of South Florida**, and the **Hillsborough County Extension Service**. The event was designed to share results from the recently completed **City of Tampa Urban Ecological Analysis 2006–2007** study and to obtain citizens' feedback for city officials to consider during revisions to public policy.



delight with the large attendance at the event. She further expressed her commitment to ensuring that Tampa has a healthy forest and noted its contribution to making Tampa a premier city in Florida. Her commitment to the urban forest was punctuated by announcing her desire to build a world-class city arboretum.

The meeting started with a welcome from Hillsborough County Extension Forester **Rob Northrop**, followed by an introduction to the study from **Karen Palus**, Director of the Tampa Parks and Recreation Department—the initiators of the urban forest assessment. Both speakers pointed out the importance of understanding the role the forest plays in urban areas with respect to its ecological, social, and economic functions. The Mayor of Tampa, **Pam Iorio**, was then introduced and she expressed her

Keynote speaker **Dr. Wayne Zipperer** from the USDA Forest Service gave a thoughtful speech on how urban forests are part of an ecosystem that is composed of interacting ecological and social systems. He gave an example of how New York City was faced with the challenge of declining water quality and how it used trees as a low cost and low tech solution verses an expensive and technically difficult engineering alternative. He challenged the audience to think

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Inviting Youth to Explore Their Urban Forest

By Jennifer A. Seitz
UF–School of Forest Resources and Conservation

Often I hear teachers in urban communities say that since they do not have a state or national forest in their area they can not teach about trees. An important opportunity is missed when teachers do not realize the teaching tool located in their community—the urban forest. Examining soil compaction's effect on tree health and water flow, mapping the type of trees in a designated area, and determining tree cover are a couple of ways to encourage students to look at the urban forest. Natural resource professionals, urban foresters, and extension agents can take the initiative to bring this topic to classrooms.

The School of Forest Resources and

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The Use of Nominal Groups to Understand Community Perceptions

By Jennifer A. Seitz

UF – School of Forest Resources and Conservation

Community involvement in protecting and managing urban trees is important to ensuring this resource remains in the community. An understanding of the public's beliefs and attitudes towards trees will assist county managers, planners, and foresters in working with the community to maintain urban forests. One method for capturing community perceptions and beliefs is through the nominal group technique.

Nominal groups focus on controlled brainstorming in a group setting with limited interaction between participants during the generation of ideas. The facilitator sets communication guidelines by establishing time limits, maintaining group order, ensuring that everyone is heard, and answering questions. Establishing objectives, identifying stakeholders, and determining meeting locations are essential elements for incorporating the use of nominal groups in a project.

Step one is to determine your project objectives. Ask yourself what it is that you want to find out. Then develop a couple of questions to ask your participants to get the required



information. For example, to understand the community's perceptions on the benefits and costs of trees one may ask, "What are the benefits of trees to you and your community?" and "What are the cost of trees to you and your community?"

The second step is to identify stakeholders through person to person conversations, existing networks, and internet searches. Determine which part of your audience you want to target. Consider partnering with the county and city offices of neighborhood relations and the local county extension office to obtain contact information for your target audience.

Lastly, determine where, when, and how many meetings to schedule based on your audience's location. If your audience is scattered throughout the county, consider holding at least two nominal group afternoon or evening sessions on different days at locations central to the audience.

At the session, the facilitator explains the purpose for the meeting and that everyone will have the opportunity to share their thoughts on the topic. The next steps are outlined below:

1. The facilitator asks a question (e.g., What are the benefits of trees to you and your community?) and participants write down all of their ideas on a 5 x 7 inch note card.
2. The facilitator invites participants to share one idea. These ideas are written on and posted to allow for everyone to

"...One method for capturing community perceptions and beliefs is through the nominal group technique."

see. Continue this process until all new ideas are given.

3. As a group review the ideas to determine if any should be combined.
4. Have each person write their top five favorite ideas from 1 to 5 on the backside of their note card. Another option is to give everyone five "sticky dots" to use as a vote. Participants may use their five votes for one idea or for five different ideas.
5. When the votes are added, the priority ideas will be ranked highest.
6. Repeat the process for additional questions.

Challenges to managing and dealing with urban and urbanizing forests are often due to people's differing beliefs and attitudes toward trees. The perceptions revealed in nominal group sessions can assist land managers, planners, and urban foresters in developing needs assessment surveys, education materials, and garnering community support for urban trees.

For questions please contact Jennifer by email at jacohen@ufl.edu or by phone at (352) 846-2329.

The Community Forest Designation Program: Managing Our Community Forest Landscape One Property at a Time

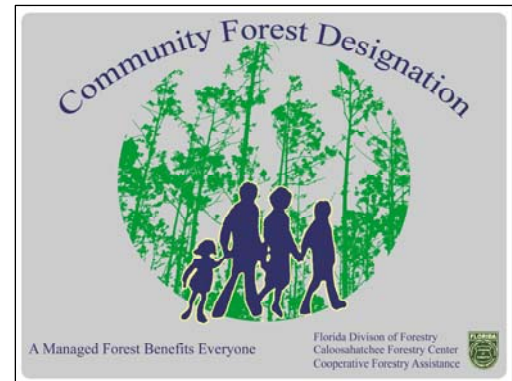
By Micah D. Pace, M.S., Cooperative Forestry Assist. Coordinator and Michael W. Weston, Cooperative Forestry Assist. Senior Forester
Florida Division of Forestry

As Florida's landscape turns more urbanized both urban residents and rural landowners increasingly need access to information about sound forest management practices. To date, existing forest management assistance programs have primarily focused on larger properties and incorporated municipalities. In response, the **Florida Division of Forestry (DOF)** is stepping forward to address the needs of residents who live in communities in and around forested areas. Some of these communities are located next to undeveloped and unmanaged forested tracts, while others contain common lands set aside for green space or to satisfy local conservation requirements.

It is important for the people who live in communities containing forests and natural areas to actively manage these dynamic ecosystems. Over time, the desired structure of these forests deteriorate from the impacts of natural events such as wildfires and tropical storms. Persons responsible for managing these areas need tools and incentives to undertake an active forest management program.

A certified Community Forest has five components:

- A Volunteer Community Forest Management Group
- A Forest Management Plan and/or an Urban Forest Master Plan
- A Management Program for Controlling Invasive Exotic Plants
- A Wildland Fuel Management Program
- An Annual Arbor Day Celebration.



To achieve this objective, the DOF proudly announces its newest tool for community forest management, **The Community Forest Designation (CFD) Program**. This program is designed to promote and support active management of community forests across the landscape and provide recognition to participating communities through *Community Forest* certification.

The CFD Program incorporates the principles of the existing *Firewise*, *Tree City USA*, and *Forest Stewardship* Programs, and tailors them to smaller residential communities containing forest land. Eligibility extends to individually owned properties containing less than 20 acres. Homeowner associations of any size with an existing governing body are also eligible, as well as, golf courses, other private entities, and school and college campuses who have greenspace that includes (or could include) trees. Although the program addresses management of individual parcels, the overall goal is to encourage a continuous forested landscape with linkages between forested parcels.

Communities will have access to professionally written management plans tailored to their community forest characteristics, needs, and goals. The community may call on the DOF or knowledgeable forestry consultants for assistance in achieving the five guidelines. Once the community or group of owners feels that they have satisfied the guidelines, they can request a DOF forester to visit the property to review for certification. Approved communities receive two *Community Forest Designation* signs, a plaque recognizing their efforts, and a press release coordinated through the DOF to publicize the stewardship efforts of the community.

Currently, the CFD is being operated as a pilot program in south Florida. Interested parties in the counties south of the Caloosahatchee River can contact **Senior Forester Mike Weston** at (239) 690-3500 x 118 for more information. Those on the east coast in Palm Beach County and south can contact **Senior Forester Mark Torok** at (954) 475-4194. Program information will soon be posted on the DOF website at <http://www.fl-dof.com>.

Community Action in the Urban Forest

Science Corner

By Dr. Wayne C. Zipperer, Research Scientist
USDA Forest Service

In my previous columns, I have addressed the ecosystem and ecosystem management from the prospective of managing ecosystem processes for goods and services. If you remember, an urban ecosystem is composed of three primary components: socio-cultural, economic, and biophysical. In this column, I want to focus on the socio-cultural component, and specifically the aspect of community action.

It is important to recognize that urban forestry does not exist without the socio-cultural component. Urban forestry is about people and creating an urban environment that is beneficial to residents, workers, and visitors. As urban foresters, we know how and where to manage the urban forest for ecosystem benefits, but what about the socio-cultural components? A variety of socio-cultural research conducted by groups such as **Lynn Westphall's** unit in USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station and **Frances Kuo's** program at University of Illinois and by individuals such as **Kathy Wolf** at the University of Washington and **Cassandra Johnson** in the USFS Southern Research Station, have

“...Community action involves citizens realizing that green infrastructure is just as important as the grey infrastructure with respect to education, emotional and mental well-being, and physical health.”

shown the importance of urban forestry to our every day life. Examples of study findings include how green infrastructure improves the self-esteem of youth and mothers, reduces crime, and improves the behavior of children with attention deficit disorder.

Newspaper articles abound on local groups or neighborhoods planting trees or participating in a local tree planting program. There is no question that tree planting efforts are important, but community action efforts encompass much more.



Community action involves citizens realizing that green infrastructure is just as important as the grey infrastructure with respect to emotional and mental well-being, physical health, and access to education. It involves working with local officials to develop policies that place green infrastructure on the same planning and budgetary level as the grey infrastructure. In Gainesville, Florida, as in many towns and cities, the tree advisory board provides critical input on management activities and decisions as well as budgetary issues.

The community is our eyes, ears, and voice in the political arena. As managers, we must not only grow a strong forest, but we must also grow a strong community support for our work. Humans need trees in their neighborhoods and cities, and urban foresters need community involvement to fulfill that need.

Wayne can be reached by email at wzipperer@fs.fed.us or by phone at (352) 376-4576.



Inviting Youth to Explore ...

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Conservation at the University of Florida created the **Urban Forests: A Supplement to Florida's Project Learning Tree** to accompany the core guide of their natural resource education program **Florida Project Learning Tree (PLT)**. While some of the PLT activities from the main guide are well suited to being used in urban areas, few of them convey the many benefits of urban forests or explain strategies for protecting and maintaining this natural resource to city residents.



The Supplement is based on three themes: urban forest ecology, benefits of an urban forest, and strategies for improving urban forest health. The booklet contains 59 hands-on activities to help youth in grades 3–8 explore their urban environment. This document can be obtained by downloading it for free from the Florida PLT Web site or by attending an Urban Forest Workshop. Additional details on both can be found at http://sfrc.ufl.edu/plt/materials_and_programs/urban_forests.html.

Helping youth better understand the benefits of our urban ecosystem through activities that encourage critical thinking and utilization of the scientific method can create a well-informed citizenry for the future. The next time you receive a request to give a classroom presentation, consider inviting the students to explore their urban forest.

Jennifer can be reached by email at jacohen@ufl.edu or by phone at (352) 846-2329.

Visiting Scholar

Dr. Min Zhao from Shanghai Normal University and Fellow at the World Forest Institute, spent the month of June with colleagues at UF-SFRC. She expanded upon her research focused on quantifying the benefits of urban forests and better understanding the urban forest carbon cycle. Dr. Zhao spent time learning about Ecosystem Service Models and worked to understand field data collection procedures.



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We want to hear from you!

Let us know what topics and information you want to see in future issues. Send ideas to Jennifer at flurbanforests@ifas.ufl.edu.

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**contributors are from the University of Florida*

Mayor's Symposium ...

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about their role in the urban forest and recognized that trees and forests are only *part* of the solution to such challenges we face with regards to water quality and quantity, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and atmospheric pollution, and conservation of wildlife habitat. He suggested the other part of the solution is *people*, since we make choices day to day that affect these forest functions.

Then, results from the urban forest ecological assessment were presented by **Mr. Shawn Landry** of the University of South Florida and **Dr. Michael G. Andreu** from the University of Florida. The former focused on the quantification of the aerial extent of the forest canopy across the city using GIS and remote sensing techniques. Dr. Andreu and his team utilized the Urban Forest Effects Model to quantify the structure and composition of the urban forest, and provided economic values for carbon sequestration and storage, pollution and energy use reduction, and a replacement estimate for Tampa's urban forest. The full report can be downloaded from our main web site at <http://sfrc.ufl.edu/urbanforestry>.

The intent of these presentations was to inform the public about the extent of our knowledge of the forest within the city of Tampa. By establishing this baseline citizens and leaders can better formulate strategies to manage the urban forest. For example, because of this study we now understand that Brazilian pepper, a non-native invasive tree species, is the second most common

tree in the city in terms of their number of stems. Prior to this study, forest managers knew this was a concern but were not aware of the extent of the problem. This is something managers will need to address in the near future.

The last part of the symposium broke the attendees into small focus groups. Each group discussed the issues and concerns pertaining to the management of the urban forest they felt were most important. The groups then voted on the list of ideas they generated and presented their top concerns to the entire audience. Some of the ideas that were generated included: storm water credits for tree preservation, movement from single tree management policies to urban forest management policies, and developing incentive programs for invasive species removal. The most common theme articulated by nearly all groups was the need for additional educational programs to raise awareness about the importance of the urban forest to Tampa's citizens.

This event was the first in a series that will focus on urban and urbanizing forests in the Tampa Bay Watershed. The next workshop is scheduled for September 25 at the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center in Wimauma, Florida and will focus on linking management of urban and urbanizing forests to water quality and quantity and the health of Tampa Bay. For registration information about this event email cvondrak@ufl.edu or phone (813) 744-5519 x 104.

Urban and Urbanizing Forests Program

STAFF

Dr. Michael G. Andreu	Assistant Professor
Dr. Francisco Escobedo	Assistant Professor
Melissa H. Friedman	Biological Scientist
Jennifer A. Seitz	Extension Associate

"We address the issues surrounding expanding urban areas and to understand forest ecosystems in and around urban areas and their multiple functions."

Check Out Our Web Site

<http://sfrc.ufl.edu/urbanforestry>

School of Forest Resources and
Conservation, UF/IFAS
PO Box 110410
Gainesville, FL 32611

Phone: (352) 378-2169 and
(352) 846-2329

University of Florida - IFAS
GCRC - Plant City Campus
1200 N. Park Road
Plant City, FL 33563

Phone: (813) 757-2272

We welcome questions,
comments, and suggestions.
Please send to Jennifer Seitz at
flurbanforests@ifas.ufl.edu.