

Recommendation 9. Integrate Urban Forestry Concepts and Techniques in Federal Initiatives Aimed at Sustainable Communities and Green Infrastructure.

Urban Forests stand at the heart of healthy, livable communities. Aside from the obvious aesthetic benefits, trees within urban forests save energy, improve the city's air, protect its water, and underpin economic sustainability. Their presence helps bolster property values, stabilize and add beauty to neighborhoods, and increase income for businesses. Trees also remove numerous poisonous gasses and absorb particulates, dusts, and pollens. Overcoming forest fragmentation begins with a renewed emphasis on the nation's urban forests. The health of urban watersheds and their waterways depends heavily on the presence of forested corridors lining their banks. Forests within cities enable citizens to experience a deeper appreciation and understanding of the ways of nature, and they enhance an ethic of stewardship.

Recommendation 9a. Form a RSF Workgroup to ensure that urban forestry concepts are fully incorporated in federal community development initiatives.

Several major federal initiatives are currently being developed to enhance community livability and development opportunities through the use of green infrastructure and similar concepts, many of which are closely related to forests and forestry. The RSF is particularly well-suited to this task owing to its focus on sustainability in a multi-stakeholder setting spanning spatial scales ranging from the national to local and sectors ranging from private individuals to federal agencies, industry associations and NGOs. A key federal initiative here is the interagency (EPA, DOT and HUD) Partnership for Sustainable Communities, which is focused on providing for the nation's housing and transportation needs while protecting the environment and addressing climate change in rural, suburban and urban communities nationwide. Forestry has an obvious and major role to play here.

Recommendation 9b. Develop an Urban Forest Force, within the AmeriCorps program to work with state and local urban forestry programs. This program would generate immediate benefits in the form of jobs alongside the long-term benefits that accrue to forested communities. The work could piggy-back on existing programs, such as the Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers. The Forest Service operates 22 Job Corps centers nationwide. Job Corps is the Nation's premier residential training program for disadvantaged youth, ages 16 through 24. Students are provided with educational opportunities and vocational training. The program provides advance training in key natural resource programs leading to potential careers in wildfire suppression and other natural resource technical fields. Recruitment for the Urban Forest Force could be carried out in the latter part of 2010 for its first year of operation in 2011.

Recommendation 9c. Promote the creation of forested corridors (continuous tree ribbons, greenways) that connect adjacent forests to the city.

These corridors are ideal for the waterways that flow in and out of the city, as they already provide natural corridors adjacent to which trees can be planted. This landscape scale emphasis provides a valuable educational resource, wildlife habitat, and enhances the quality of life for urban residents. At the outset, this work will entail several key aspects, including identifying successful examples and potential pilot projects, assessing the costs and benefits of corridor creation, and outreach to urban planners and their municipalities.