

DePaul University's Urban Forestry Program

Investing in the Next Generation of Foresters

The Challenge

The Chicago metropolitan area is home to a rich diversity of both people and natural resources. Over 350 natural resource-based non-profit, government, educational, and for-profit organizations have a presence in Chicago. Most of these organizations employ natural resource graduates as well as student interns to work on nearby fragmented and degraded forest ecosystems. However, there are very few opportunities for students to enroll in natural resource coursework within the Chicago region. For many students, attending school outside of the region is not an option. In addition, very few universities offer coursework specific to working in the highly fragmented but ecologically significant ecosystems found in the Chicago metropolitan region.

The Solution

With the assistance of the USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area, DePaul has risen to the challenge and developed a progressive Urban Forestry program with a mission to serve the community and study urban forest ecosystems in the Chicago metropolitan area. Course offerings such as Issues in Urban Forestry, Natural History of Forests, and Geographic Information Systems have resulted in strong student, faculty, and community support for the program.

Resulting Benefits

- Applied research conducted by staff and students has assisted in the understanding of the ecological impacts of exotic plants such as European buckthorn.
- This ground breaking research may lead to new protocols for ecological restoration.
- A CD-ROM guide on soil microarthropods has been developed facilitating the understanding of these important but neglected components of regional

DePaul's ground breaking research indicates that Buckthorn not only inhibits and alters native woodland diversity but leads to the rapid decomposition of the litter layer severely altering soil productivity.



De Paul's Urban Forestry class using a malaise trap for the monitoring of insect populations in Chicago.

ecosystems and their impact on biodiversity in the area.

- A state-of-the-art laboratory has been developed for use on community related projects that facilitates practical hand-on learning through applied science research.
- The DePaul program is a contributing member of the Chicago Wilderness organization and assisted in the development of the internationally recognized Biodiversity Recovery Plan.
- DePaul's newly developed GIS lab is an important resource for community-led urban forestry projects.

Sharing Success

- DePaul has developed and distributed computerized maps of important ecological areas throughout the Chicago region.
- DePaul is partnering with organizations such as the Chicago Botanic Gardens, Morton Arboretum, Chicago Wilderness (consortium of over 150 natural resource organizations), the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, and several Forest Preserve districts.
- They have worked with the USDA Forest Service and local conservation organizations to develop the necessary science for monitoring city trees and successfully restore degraded ecosystems in the region.



USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry

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