

The Roots of Community Forestry

The Challenge

Community forestry programs across Maine had seen little growth in recent years. The Maine Forest Service was still poised to serve, with an incredible reservoir of knowledge and expertise, but their challenge lay in stirring up new interest and dialogue.

The Solution

“Help trees help you,” urges the television ad for Project Canopy, the reinvented face of Maine’s community forestry program. Project Canopy helps Maine towns and communities develop long-term community tree programs that maximize the benefits trees and forests provide.

“Project Canopy wasn’t just a repackaging of our community forestry program,” assures Maine Urban Forestry Coordinator Mike DeBonis. “It was also a retooling and refining of our approach to meet today’s public needs.”

With its program overhauled and energized, Maine moved next to marketing and branding Project Canopy to increase community participation in forestry. A grant from the USDA Forest Service helped get a comprehensive marketing initiative off the ground in 1999. The campaign included:

- Publications,
- A Web site (www.projectcanopy.org),
- Radio spots and television commercials, and
- Press releases and other media efforts.

Resulting Benefits

Interest in community forestry spiked as a result of the publicity generated by Project Canopy. Many communities reinvigorated their own efforts, or started up fresh ones, and have remained active.

“Many of the concepts used in the Project Canopy campaign can be carried out with minimal cost,” encourages DeBonis. “Defining a message, marketing and promotion, and delivering on promises are all elements that made the Project Canopy campaign successful.”

*“Help trees help you!”
Learn more at www.projectcanopy.org.*



Pat Cormier, Maine Forest Service District Forester, ignites Biddeford students' interest in their community trees during the city's annual Arbor Week celebration.

Familiarity with and trust in Project Canopy proved itself in 2002, when public awareness of a recently introduced pest was needed. The hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) had found its way into Maine, where 1 in 10 trees is a hemlock and potential HWA host. Project Canopy was there with the name recognition and the channels to get the information out that citizens needed to identify and report HWA infestations.

Sharing Success

Project Canopy got people talking so that awareness about trees would grow. Down-to-earth strategies were shared and technical experts sent into the field to help communities with:

- Volunteer recruitment, organization, and training,
- Community tree ordinances and tree plans,
- Fundraising, and
- Integration of technology for street tree inventories.

Project Canopy continues to bring towns together to share experiences and success. The Tree City USA towns of Maine recently convened to build connections, and Arbor Week also brings Project Canopy participants together.

No two Maine communities are the same, so Project Canopy does not require a rigid formula or program. It shares State resources and networks communities for mutual support.



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