

# Greening Forest Service Offices in the Northeast and Midwest

## Microgrants Fund Sustainable Operations at 18 Locations

### The Challenge

The Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry (NA S&PF) and the Northern Research Station (NRS), Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, each received a microgrant award from the national office last year for their high response rates to a national commuter survey.

### The Solution

The NA S&PF and NRS Sustainable Operations Team decided to divide the funds among 18 NA S&PF and NRS offices and laboratories, to put the funds directly to local sustainable operations efforts. Each location received \$220 to invest, and several also contributed local funds.

### Resulting Benefits

**Reducing energy consumption**—In Houghton, MI, a blower door and thermal energy audit was completed to identify areas to improve for efficient heating and cooling of the building. Three locations purchased Energy Star refrigerators/freezers to replace old appliances. Several other offices installed energy saving devices including motion-sensor light switches, programmable thermostats, and digital timers for printers.

**Reducing waste**—In Morgantown, WV, and in two other locations, a water filter was installed in the break room to reduce the use of disposable water bottles. Two locations used the funds to improve their local composting systems, which reduce their waste streams and provide valuable fertilizer and amendments for their office plants and USDA People's Gardens. Others increased and organized their recycling program.



*In the Grand Rapids, MN, office of the Northern Research Station, microgrant funds were used for sustainable landscaping with native plants.*

**Greening the fleet**—In Durham, NH, a portable air compressor with a digital air pressure gauge was purchased, making it easy for employees to keep the fleet's tires properly inflated, which increases fuel efficiency.

**Reducing water use**—In Delaware, OH, two low-flow urinals were installed.

**Landscaping and gardening sustainably**—Three locations used the funds for sustainable landscaping and gardening projects that reduce the area of grass that needs mowing (decreasing fuel consumption and related emissions) and increase esthetics and wildlife habitat. In Warren/Irvine, PA, they are planting 44 milkweed plants as part of their effort to establish a native wildflower field.

### Sharing Success

By sharing their local sustainable operations with other office locations, the Green Teams and local sustainable operations champions continue to inspire one another. The sustainable operations efforts also model ways in which all NA S&PF and NRS employees can reduce their environmental footprints both in the office and at home.

*“We are thankful for the microgrants and thrilled that local use of these funds are yielding immediate results across the major environmental footprint areas.”*

*—Sherri Wormstead*

*Chair, NA S&PF and NRS Sustainable Operations Team*



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