

Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee

Community Forests: Our Legacy and Our Future

Policy Adopted February 20, 2009

The Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee (MnSTAC) recognizes there are essential connections between the health of community forests and habitat for game, fish and wildlife, and clean water; and the experiences of people in the outdoors, parks and along trails. MnSTAC also recognizes that community forests exist within the context of a larger landscape. Human activities within municipal limits can have a positive or negative impact on populations of game, fish and wildlife, and on water quality across the entire landscape.

Examples of this broad connectivity:

- Even within the most urbanized communities wild spaces exist; providing patches and corridors of valuable game, fish, and wildlife habitat important for breeding and migration. Species of fish, birds and mammals find acceptable habitat for at least part of their life cycle in the parks, open space and backyards of municipalities.
- Research supports the role of vegetation, including trees, in maintaining water quality throughout watersheds and that trees serve as one of the most cost effective mitigations for non-point source pollution and stormwater management. Urban stormwater runoff is a major source of pollution entering wetlands, streams, lakes, and oceans. Healthy trees can reduce the amount of runoff and pollutant loading in receiving water.
- Trees and associated vegetation protect water that fish, wildlife and people depend upon. Trees absorb pollutants in water that moves across the landscape. Trees intercept rainfall, reducing runoff volumes and soil erosion, and increasing the soils capacity to store rainfall in urbanized areas; trees help prevent the degradation of habitat throughout the region.
- Since most Minnesota citizens live in municipalities, community forests are part of the most common and typical outdoor experience. Citizens who interact positively with nature in their own community understand the value of wild things living in wild and rural places, and will support resource conservation efforts around the state, enhancing our Minnesota natural resource legacy.
- Exotic pests such as emerald ash borer (EAB) threaten forests in municipal and rural landscapes throughout Minnesota and cannot be managed effectively in isolation. Forests in municipalities and rural recreation areas often serve as entry points for these pests.

MnSTAC supports and encourages the development of broad policies and local initiatives and the prioritization of projects that:

- Provide for effective management of natural areas within and adjacent to communities such that they offer diverse habitat of the highest possible quality.
- Maintain and expand healthy and diverse community forests that will not only provide habitat for adaptable species but also protect the quality of water that all species of game, fish and wildlife depend upon.

MNSTAC POLICY STATEMENT

"Community Forests: Our Legacy and our Future"



- Provide a variety of parks, trails, and open space that offer many different opportunities for community residents to observe and experience game, fish and wildlife in a natural environment on a daily basis, and foster an understanding and appreciation of nature and wild things.
- Provide funding for ecologically significant projects of urban and community forestry across the state.
- Fund tree planting as a stormwater mitigation Best Management Practice strategy.
- Protect community forests through active forest management and forest health care. Research supports the role of vegetation, including trees, in maintaining water quality throughout watersheds and that trees serve as one of the most cost effective mitigations for non-point source pollution and stormwater management. Urban stormwater runoff is a major source of pollution entering wetlands, streams, lakes, and oceans. Healthy trees can reduce the amount of runoff and pollutant loading in receiving water.

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Since 1974, the Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee (MnSTAC) has advised the State Legislature on community forestry issues. MnSTAC is the key advisor on the best ways to preserve, protect, expand, and improve Minnesota's urban and community forests; and promote and facilitate the coordination of efforts being made by the multitude of jurisdictions and entities which own and affect our urban and community forests. Members represent a broad spectrum of tree related interests. MnSTAC fosters and supports local community tree programs across the state.

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