

DNR UCF Updates

Date: 1/19/2022

Staff Updates

- We are currently waiting for DNR's Human Resources review for a 3 year project specialist position to assist with the LCCMR Protect Community Forests by Managing Ash for EAB.
- DNR will be hiring six (6) interns, two (2) in the Twin-Cities Metro and four (4) out of Grand Rapids to conduct tree surveys in communities throughout the state. The positions have been posted, and start date will be in May 2023.

Grant Updates

- **Inflation Reduction Act:** \$1.5B available from Forest Service for tree planting and related activities.
 - Forest Service has provided "Advice to States" which is for UCF lead state agencies.
 - Key takeaways:
 - Proposals that deliver 40% of the benefits of IRA investments to support disadvantaged communities experiencing low tree canopy and environmental justice will receive priority consideration.
 - A minimum of 80% of federal funding awarded to States must be competitively sub-awarded to deliver urban and community forestry program benefits at the community level.
- **Reforestation Underserved Urban Communities (Sustainable Urban Forest & Resilience 2022):** A competitive grant from the Forest Service was awarded for \$489,000 to assist in public and private tree planting with a focus on underserved communities.
 - Contracts are currently in development.
- The UCF team is being awarded funds from the Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act for: Environmental Justice, Urban Wood Utilization, and EAB Assistance to the new finds in NE Minnesota.
 - Funding has not yet been received from Forest Service.
- **2023 Preparing for EAB grants program:** DNR welcomes applications from local units of government within Minnesota that assist communities in managing ash trees for emerald ash borer (EAB) on public land, with \$315,000 available in general fund dollars to fund two-year projects.
 - A Request for Applications is open for the next round of dedicated and ongoing state funding.

Legislative Updates

- A joint informational hearing on EAB for the Senate and House Environmental Committees was held 1/10/2022. This is approximately 35 legislators hearing on EAB. Agencies represented

included DNR, MDA, and MPCA. Additional stakeholders including MnSTAC were provided time to speak to the issue and current needs. There were lots of questions and seemingly lots of interest in the subject.

- The Urban and Community Forestry team submitted a change level request for additional funding around MN Releaf (statute 88.82) with an emphasis on emerald ash borer management. The UCF Team is in continuing conversations around this request.

Program Updates

- The UCF Team, led by Emma Schultz, is working with MSA and MnSTAC on the Festival of Trees. The Festival of Trees will take place May 20, in conjunction with the Minnesota Tree Climbing Championship which will be May 19-21.
- Emma Schultz is continuing to work on a community management survey and will be looking to garner management information required by the Forest Service as well as information on wood waste and utilization.
- In partnership with Habitat for Humanity - Twin Cities, a small amount of funding (approximately \$60,000) has been procured to assist low-income residents with tree care on private property. The application for this is open now!
- Scholarships for ISA Certified Arborist for under-represented arborists is open in partnership with MSA. Under-represented arborists include: Black, Indigenous, People of Color; LGBTQI; Disability status; Veteran; Low-income; Woman; Living outside of 7-county metro. Scholarships will fund: exam fee; computer testing fee; and Arborists' Certification Study Guide. <http://msa-live.org/isa-certified-arborist-scholarship>
- Tree City USA application portal has "closed" for 2022 and applications are currently in review.
- Molly Coddling continues to meet with community organizations, municipal programs, and non-profit organizations to assess where UCF programming might be of assistance in furthering their canopy-related environmental justice priorities. Private tree removal assistance, community-designed planting projects, and increasing the capacity of workforce development programs to offer urban forestry training are all priorities that align with IRA-eligible activities. These meetings have resulted in connecting community organizations to resources to support their goals, as well as improved external awareness of upcoming state opportunities through IRA funding.
- Molly Coddling is also working internally to support divisional environmental justice-related initiatives, including planning for the 2023 Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers programming, intercultural engagement conversations with Cooperative Forest Management Foresters across the state, and assisting Departmental staff on the Governor's Childrens Outdoor Bill of Rights Initiative.