

## DNR UCF Updates

Date: 10/27/2023

### Staffing Updates

- **Adding Staff:** We are hiring a Cooperative Forest Management (CFM) Assistant Supervisor position which will focus supervision on UCF staff. We have Division leadership approval to move forward on adding two more Community Forest Project Specialists, locations to be determined, but possibly out-state. The program is seeking approval for a Grant's Coordinator position and an additional Metro CFM.
- **Community Forestry Corps:** DNR has been awarded two full-time Corps members who will begin on October 23. These two members will be available to assist the MnSTAC Outreach Committee and potentially assist in other ways.

### Grant Updates

- **ReLeaf:** The ReLeaf grant provided \$6.883 million in funding. The grant application closed on September 18, 2023. DNR received 151 applications totaling \$33,118,641.94 in requests. Applicants have been notified of their funding status, and funded applicants have entered the contract development phase.
- **Bonding:** The Bonding grant provided \$10.063 million in funding. The application closed on October 2, 2023. DNR received 72 applications totaling \$16,797,218.42.
- **Inflation Reduction Act:** \$1.5B available from Forest Service for tree planting and related activities.
  - UCF Team does not yet have a contract in place with the Forest Service for the \$5.25M. All of the paperwork is in place, and we are simply waiting on the execution of the formal grant agreement.
- **[2023 Preparing for EAB grants program:](#)**
  - All contracts are now fully signed, and work is ongoing.
- **Reforestation Underserved Urban Communities (Sustainable Urban Forest & Resilience 2022):** No update.
- **LCCMR Protect Community Forests:**
  - One community has closed out their grant program and currently 34 of 35 funded communities are working towards their grant deliverables.
  - Over \$750,000 of 2.2 million has been reimbursed to partner communities.
  - The MDA has continued its early detection work in greater Minnesota, identifying new finds in Mille Lacs and Benton Counties, along with providing informational presentations to communities impacted by new EAB finds.
  - CCMN&IA and Tree Trust continue to partner with funded communities to assist with tree planting efforts across the state.
  - Rapid canopy assessment work continues across the state, with over 150 communities assessed.

- 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.
  - All of the paperwork is in place, and we are simply waiting on the execution of the formal grant agreement.
- **Environmental justice contracts:**
  - UCF EJ coordinator is solidifying 2024 direct contracts with two place-based organizations to conduct education, outreach, and community forestry projects in Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN Final contract details and objectives forthcoming.

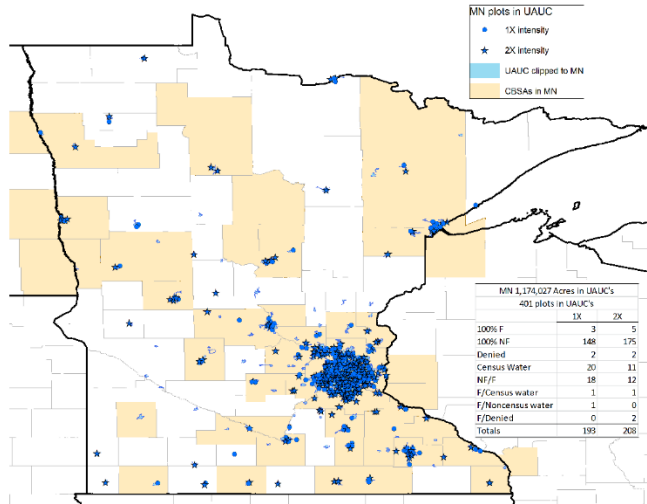
## Legislative Updates

- UCF Staff is working through the internal process during this policy year.

## Program Updates

- UCF Staff completed the federal Cooperative Management Review, an audit of the program that takes place every 5 years. The Forest Service found that all recommendations from 2018 had been met.
  - Forest Service Recommendations to DNR
    - Make EJ position permanent
    - Increase staff capacity
    - Create incentives for young people to get involved in TCA
    - Consider alternatives/back-up plans for compliance checks
  - Forest Service Commendations to DNR
    - Exceptional staff/team
    - University of Minnesota partnership/program delivery
    - Trailblazer in Environmental Justice
    - Creative approaches to increasing engagement
    - Effective expansion of grants to less-resourced communities
    - Commitment to U of M faculty search
- UCF EJ Staff community partnership activities include:
  - Presenting with community partner Gary Hampton, Ajani Group, at the Morton Urban Forestry Justice Forum series on frameworks for authentic community engagement for urban forestry professionals.
  - Presenting at the World Forum on Urban Forests with national tree equity specialists about building capacity for community engagement ahead of IRA funding awards.
  - Supporting Frogtown Green, Urban Farm and Garden Alliance, Renewing the Countryside and Pilgrim Baptist Church on mini forest project planning.
  - Supporting Minneapolis residents around residential tree maintenance priorities in partnership with the city of Minneapolis Health Department, Harrison Neighborhood Association, Metro Blooms, and Hope Inc.
  - Developing presentation on best practices, resources and support for environmental justice engagement at the November MNSTAC forum in collaboration with municipal foresters from across the state.

- Developing environmental justice outreach orientation and tools for Minnesota Tree Care Advisors and Tree stewards in collaboration with UMN-UFOR staff. Two part workshop series to be held in January, February 2024.
- The first round of Urban Forest Inventory Analysis has been completed and data is currently being analyzed prior to being made available publicly.



- 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>