

History of the Council

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The Connecticut Urban Forest Council was born November 17, 1987, when a group of forestry, horticulture, and natural resource professionals met in Storrs to discuss needs and opportunities in urban forestry. The recently completed state forest resources plan had identified the lack of urban forest management as a priority need area for Connecticut. Yet very few attempts at improving (or creating) municipal urban forestry programs were underway, and those that did exist were largely disjointed and lacked resources.

In response to this situation, University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Forester Stephen H. Broderick and Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Forestry Assistant State Forester Donald H. Smith, Jr., convened the meeting, which included representatives from the following:

- Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station;
- Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Forestry;
- Connecticut Forest and Park Association;
- University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources;
- University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System;
- U.S. Forest Service.

USDA Extension's National Forestry Program Leader Dr. Fred Deneke facilitated. The meeting concluded with these agreements:

- Continue to meet bi-monthly under the title of Connecticut Urban Forestry Working Group (the name was changed to Council May 22, 1990);
- Target efforts around four objectives:
 - (1) to promote sound, state-of-the-art urban forest management;
 - (2) to create awareness of the value of community trees among community decision makers and the general public;
 - (3) to help those charged with managing the urban forest to develop the skills and resources needed to do the job;

(4) to maximize the value of available resources by promoting pro-active cooperation among public and private organizations involved in urban and community forestry;

- Immediately conduct a mail/phone survey of municipalities to refine these goals into an effective working agenda.

Within a year, the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System had dedicated a full time staff position to urban forestry, and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Forestry soon followed suit. With individuals within these agencies taking the lead, by the fall of 1989 the Working Group had implemented a successful model urban forestry program in Middletown, held its first annual Connecticut Urban Forest Conference, and provided information and assistance directly to over a dozen municipalities.

Today, the Connecticut Urban Forest Council has expanded to include public and private institutions, and the scope of its work has increased accordingly. Its goals, however, remain essentially the same as those identified at the very first meeting of the working group.

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