

**July 12, 2016 Consortium of North Shore Environmental Groups
MINUTES**

“Trees: Enhancing and Protecting our Suburban Forests”

35 attendees from 15 communities plus three speakers.

Dr. Andrew Bell, Curator of Woody Plants, Chicago Botanic Garden

Reviewed benefits of trees (including improved air quality and cooling) and importance of careful selection of species. Does research using climate models to predict performance of 50 tree species. He also teaches graduate students doing research on rare oak tree species. He teaches best practices to the next generation of landscape. CBG is a resource for information on trees and plant health. Feel free to use him as a resource for your community and contact him with questions.

Lydia Scott, Director, Chicago Region Trees Initiative, Morton Arboretum

Partnership of seven counties to encourage collaborative efforts to provide healthy forests. There are about 157 million trees in our urban forest in this region – including public and private lands. 21% shrub and tree cover, 15% trees cover. National average is 27% tree coverage. Most frequently seen is buckthorn. 40% of our urban forest is an invasive species or is being killed by invasive species.

CRTI has 50 community tree inventories and 700 private property inventories, and would like more. Canopy size correlates to benefits, and increased tree coverage provides clean air and water.

CRTI works to protect the existing trees. They want to improve selection, planting and care of all trees, and try to anticipate future risks to existing trees. They did a survey of communities that has helped guide their planning and actions, and are creating Community Urban Forestry Reports – detailed reports to help guide planning.

Working especially on oak trees, as they are not regenerating quickly enough.

Urban Forestry Management Plan. – all communities should base ordinances on this template. They encourage buy in from local businesses and corporations, volunteers, schools, park districts, Village

government, clubs, etc. They encourage using volunteers, and have resources to help all Villages establish volunteer stewardship.

Trees are infrastructure and should be considered and managed as carefully as other infrastructure. Recommendations:

1. Each community should have a ten year budget and plan for trees.
2. Expand diversity by not planting more than 5% of any one species or 10% of any one family.
3. CRTI is working with nurseries to expand production.
4. CRTI provides training. They may also be able to help with funding to assist volunteers.
5. Develop an educated volunteer base.
6. Develop policy and management goals.

All CONSEG communities should be members of CRTI. There is no cost to join, and they provide resources to help with trees and maintaining a healthy urban forest.

Model ordinances and useful resources are at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/racakf6ubfs8a7w/AABeSK9RhR7ioyr4Cd4o9oZoa?dl=0>

Daniella Pereira, Openlands Regional Forester & Chicago Region Tree Initiative (CRTI)

Treekeepers Program is 25 years strong, part of Openlands, a 53 year old organization. TreeKeepers trains leaders to protect and enhance our urban forest. Tree volunteers provide public benefit, reduce municipal budget and staff time requirements, provide ongoing care, create community and help communities get grant money for their trees. Treekeeper courses are offered in the spring and fall.

TreeKeepers are very focused on city projects and they are trying to reach out to establish chapters in more suburbs. The closest chapter currently is in Evanston. More information on the program is at: <http://www.openlands.org/treekeepers>

Once a resident is trained, they can do some tree maintenance, schedule volunteer events, adopt parks or trees long term, and provide volunteer hours. They teach volunteers how to plant trees, apply mulch properly, do basic research and monitoring (pest traps, etc) inventory and measure trees annually. Volunteers can advocate for smart policies and can boost public awareness of critical issues.

As part of CRTI, Openlands would like to expand tree stewardship though the seven county region. They are working on a toolbox and

guidance for all chapters. Chapters are best if they are partnerships between volunteers and the community.

Question and Answers

Q: What about pesticide use, which can kill trees?

A: There's a new subdivision being built in Highland Park that was featuring heritage trees. Kim was able, as a Councilwoman, to get the developer to include restrictions on pesticide use in the Homeowners' Association documents. This type of tool can help, along with education for homeowners about the impacts of lawn chemicals on their trees.

Q: Can you comment on the value of trees with regard to stormwater management?

A: In Lincolnshire, they worked with a developer to reduce the number of houses in a subdivision, and to include bio swales, and other green infrastructure for stormwater as part of the project. There are section 319 grants available for this type of project. It's important that trustees understand the financial benefits of trees in the community.

There is a state revolving loan fund for green stormwater infrastructure. This is pass through money from USEPA to the Illinois EPA. A certain percentage of each project must be "green infrastructure" to be eligible for these grants.

Question: Why is tree coverage being thinned to encourage oaks?

A: There is research going on locally about oaks, as they need sunlight to be successful, and aren't regenerating well. Dying Ash trees are providing some canopy gaps. They are also thinning maples. We are losing big trees and replacing them with very small trees, which don't provide the same benefits. We need both species and age diversity.

Q: Which is better for slope stabilization – native plants or trees?

A: Native plants

Q: How is climate change impacting tree selection?

A: CBG has studied this, and they have a list of recommended species at: http://www.chicagobotanic.org/plantinfo/tree_alternatives.

Some are not native, because we need to consider what will survive in difficult urban conditions. Ginkgo, for example, did well. Chicago Wilderness also has an ongoing study of trees that will survive climate

change, and have found a dilemma in that we may need to use non native species.

Foresters from CDOT have a weekly program through Openlands to talk about what trees have worked, and what haven't.

Glenview has a city tree inventory and a park district tree inventory. They are using it to better diversify and improve healthy of their canopy. Glenview recently redid their ordinance to make it more flexible. The new ordinance refers to a document that can be changed and updates it. Glenview has a plan and an ordinance and a heritage tree program. People can apply to have their tree designated as a Heritage Tree. This all helps with public education, and has been a successful approach. They also celebrated a neighborhood of heritage trees with a coffee gathering, gold ribbons on trees, etc.

Q: Public versus private tree protections. In Evanston, there are some protections of trees on public land. There is no tree ordinance for trees on private land. City is worried about the cost of tree protection programs, and management of a heritage tree program.

A: You can start with 1 species each year and expand, as they do in Joliet.

Glencoe has regulations on private trees, including requirements for construction fencing and a deposit for each tree that may be impacted. The deposit is returned after a period of time post construction if the tree is OK. Permit required for all cut downs. No fee permit for invasive species, fee for good species.

Riverwoods has an ordinance that divides by high quality versus lower quality.

Q: What about trees that are better for water retention, like poplars. Has anyone done the math about storm water control? Should this then be considered in an ordinance?

A: A large floodplain tree can soak up 300 gallons of stormwater per day. Bald Cypress is a good choice for water retention. Army Corp of Engineers is beginning to allow tree planting as mitigation for storm water. See Journal of Arboriculture, itreehydro, Morton Arboretum website, and the National Tree Benefit Calculator at www.treebenefits.com.

It's important to identify your priorities – wildlife habitat benefits are different species than water absorbing trees. Conserve Lake County has a native tree list, and Lake County Forest Preserve does a native plant sale annually.

Community Sharing:

Northfield – has a tree inventory and many tree advocates. Willow Road project includes many new trees. Some rain gardens have not been working because they have not been installed well, and the soil is not appropriate for drainage.

Tim Milburn of Park Ridge – There is an August 3rd hearing on Clean Energy in Chicago, and a rally at noon sponsored by Sierra Club. Encourages everyone to participate to encourage states to adopt the Clean Power Plan. Sierra Club is providing training on how to testify.

Judy Beck of Glenview – They are working with heritage trees. Plans should be flexible. Environmental review committee that looks at areas in the zoning code. She cited an example of a new development near The Grove where they worked with the developer on compromises that resulted in protection of some natural areas.

Karen McCormick of Evanston – August 14th Streets Alive in Evanston with Green Living Festival. Divvy Bikes expanding into Evanston.

Adam Letendre – Skokie has a draft environmental plan that will go to the Village Board on August 1st.

Saima Abbasia of Wilmette – Will try to start a TreeKeepers program in Wilmette. She organizes a tree walk in our community in October.

Wendy Pollock of Evanston – TreeKeepers will continue doing tree walks in Evanston.

Riverwoods – Working towards approval of the environmental campus around the village hall – a 6 acre area. Otherwise slated for development. It's an expensive proposal for a small village.

Dudley Onderdonk – USGBC GreenBuilt House Tour. July 23 & 24 includes a house in Highland Park. Glenview is sponsoring a tour of TOD this Thursday gathering at the library in Glenview.

Doug Gerleman – July 4th parade – with Mums Across America re pesticides. Also Illinois Right to Know GMO. Durbin voted for GMO labeling. Kirk voted against labeling. Contact your representatives about GMO labeling. Meeting with CBG about water quality. Interns are looking at plastic bag use in Northbrook

Kim Stone of Highland Park – Looking at big picture sustainability goals including fleet sustainability. Currently nothing that prohibits the planting of invasive species in HP or other communities. We may want to address this.

The next CONSEG meeting will be on Tuesday, Sept. 13, 2016, 1 - 3

pm. The topic will be "Enhancing Walkability in Your Community" in preparation for the October 4-6 visit of Mark Fenton. (www.markfenton.com)