
USDA FOREST SERVICE NORTHEAST CENTER FOR URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2003-2007



United States
Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Northeastern
Area



FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2003-2007

BACKGROUND AND MISSION

The Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry was established in October 1996, and represents a cooperative partnership among the USDA Forest Service's Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, the University of Massachusetts/Amherst, and the seven states of New England and New York. Two other regional centers are located in St. Paul, MN and at Keystone College, LaPlume, PA.

The Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry responds to urban and community forestry information needs, facilitates and supports new and existing research, and coordinates the exchange of information among the states, that contributes to healthy sustainable communities. It serves as a strategic component of the Northeastern Area's Technology Transfer initiative, and provides a mechanism for the transfer of innovative technical assistance tools to the region.

This mission provides the "opportunity to integrate the vision of an improved quality of life with the pervasive transition toward ecologically based management"ⁱⁱ and works toward the development of partnerships between Federal, State, and local agencies, community based organizations, policy makers, and civic leaders.

OVERVIEW

This document outlines the program direction of the Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry for the period 2003-2007. It is based upon the established vision and direction of the Forest Service and the cooperating states, as described in the appropriate strategic plans of each participating agency.

As outlined in the Forest Service's most recent Strategic Plan, "in the next millennium, choosing the path of innovation, integration, and expanded partnership can lead the way to making a significant difference on the land, and to reaching more people about the importance of forests and the relevancy of forestry."ⁱⁱⁱ The Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry, as outlined in its Mission, will provide an opportunity for a regional strategy that will "respond to urban and community forestry information needs, facilitate and support new and existing research, and coordinate the exchange of information among the states,"ⁱⁱⁱ contributing to healthy sustainable communities.

The activities and programs outlined in this Strategic Plan will provide the opportunity for the Center to carry out its Mission, leading to regionally complimentary programs, aimed at supporting "the partners of the urban and community forestry

DRAFT

movement; building more livable communities through the planting and care of trees and forests." ⁱ The Center will assist the states urban and community forestry programs to "provide the public and partners with timely, accurate, understandable information about the sustainable management and stewardship" ⁱⁱ and to help "strategically develop, analyze and communicate information that makes a difference in people's lives and on the land." ⁱⁱⁱ

Additionally, as noted in the latest Northeastern Areas Strategic Plan, "partnership and collaboration are the cornerstones of success for State and Private Forestry and the Northeastern Area," and "a collaborative approach facilitates dialogue, information exchange and sharing, and learning from one another, which might not otherwise be afforded." ⁱⁱⁱ This concept of partnership includes the states served by the Northeast Center as well as the entire technical resources of the Northeastern Area. The Northeast Center will work cooperatively with the other two regional centers to establish a network that can position itself to "implement strategies to promote awareness, build understanding, and generate support" while "opportunities to create new and enhance existing strategic partnerships." ⁱ

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The operating principles of the Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry reflect the regional vision of the Center and fulfill the directives established by the cooperating states and agencies. These operating principles include the following:

- Compliment rather than duplicate state programs.
- Use State Urban Forestry Coordinators as the primary point of contact for activities within each state.
- Use existing resources in New England/New York where feasible to enhance program delivery.
- Utilize state-of-the-art technologies, including the Internet, to enhance the effectiveness of programming.
- Develop train-the-trainer programs for effective transfer of information, technology and programming.
- Maintaining a close working relationship with the other regional Centers in St. Paul and Keystone College
- Replicate programs and products around the New England/New York region.
- Produce products, generic in nature, requiring little modification or customizing, that can be used throughout the New England/New York area.
- Develop Center programs through of the Advisory Board and key partners.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A review of the goals and objectives of the Forest Service's Northeastern Area , along with those of the cooperating states and the Center, were considered in the development of a Strategic Plan for the Northeast Center for Urban & Community Forestry. The established goals and objectives, common to each of these cooperators provides the foundation for a comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Northeast Center that addresses the needs of the majority of the contributing partners and provides direction and vision for the activities that will be undertaken over the next five years.

THE USDA FOREST SERVICE, NORTHEASTERN AREA - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following outlines key goals and objectives of the USDA Forest Service's Northeastern Area's program delivery:

1. Provide the public and partners with timely, accurate, understandable information about the sustainable management and stewardship, status and condition, and value of forest lands.
2. Enhance the Area's capacity to seize opportunities to respond quickly and efficiently, to make a positive difference on the land.
3. Manage forests for health and sustainability in urban, suburban and rural settings, to provide economic, social and environmental benefits to landowners and users.
4. Reduce forest fragmentation and parcelization, and adopt methods to address the management and technical assistance challenges presented by the growing numbers of forest landowners.
5. Ensure sustainable forest-based economic development by coordinating collaborative efforts and providing leadership, technical expertise and financial resources to individuals, businesses, and communities. ⁱⁱⁱ

THE STATE PLANS - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A review of the Five-Year Plans from each of the cooperating states was completed to determine the goals and objectives among each of the states. The following goals and objectives were common to the plans of the states served by the Northeast Center:

1. Public Awareness ;
2. Partnerships ;
3. Technical/financial Assistance to communities ;
4. Management of the resource ;
5. Development and support of community capacity - tree wardens, boards, ordinance, etc..

THE NORTHEAST CENTER - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Goals and Objectives of the Northeast Center for Urban and Community have been developed by the Center's Advisory Board, and are detailed below. Each of the Center's goals and objectives were linked to those of the Forest Service and the states of New England and New York in order to ensure that the initiatives undertaken by the Northeast Center compliment the intent of the federal and state programs. The following outlines the goals and objectives of the Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry:

1. Assist state Urban and Community Forestry programs by focusing on common information needs, services and research.
2. Provide a point of access for research, information and technology relating to urban and rural communities.
3. Foster community participation and volunteerism in the stewardship of healthy sustainable communities.
4. Support partnerships among Federal, State and local officials, green industry and utility professionals and volunteer groups.

LINKING THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES - A STRATEGIC PLAN

A comprehensive approach to the linking of the goals and objectives of the Center those of the state's and the Forest Service's provided the basis for the development of a strategic plan that addresses the needs of the individual states and responds to the urban and community forestry needs of the region.

The Mission of the Center provides for the opportunity to respond, facilitate, conduct research and exchange information that ultimately can provide improved public awareness of the urban forest, the development of partnerships, outreach, and the development of more comprehensive natural resource management that is based on research, technical assistance, and model programming at the state and local level. The Center can provide assistance in helping the partners realize their goals

and objectives by providing opportunities for partnerships, research, community participation, and serving as a point of access for current information needs and technical assistance.

The Strategic Plan for the Northeast Center for Urban & Community Forestry provides a framework for the activities and programming of the Center for the next five years. It expands upon the urban and community forestry initiatives that have been carried out in the region since the urban forestry program was introduced over ten years ago, builds upon the inaugural work of the Center, and provides an emphasis on emerging issues and needs within each of the states in the region. The development of "pilot projects that apply ecological concepts under a wide variety of ecological, social and economic conditions" will be tested and evaluated. Technology transfer and technical assistance will emphasize the development of best management practice, address emerging issues, and provide state-of-the-art support for professionals, natural resource managers, and policy makers.

Partnerships, at all levels, will be explored in order to ensure that sustainable programming be developed. Working to compliment the efforts of each state's Community Involvement Coordinator, the Center will encourage community involvement and volunteerism that can serve as the basis of regional programming and stewardship. Cooperation with the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters, green industry associations, and municipal tree wardens and foresters will enable the Center to fulfill its mission, while ensuring it is working toward the common vision of the region's natural resource managers.

STRIVING TOWARD EXCELLENCE - OPERATIONAL PLANS OF WORK

Specific tasks, programming, and initiatives associated with the goals and objectives of the Center will be established on a yearly basis, in an "Operational Plan of Work," in order to provide a strategy for obtaining "excellence"; the original intent for establishment of the Center. The operational strategy of the Center will seek to fulfill the established mission, achieve the outlined goals and objectives, and provide support for existing programs and initiatives.

The yearly Operational Plan of Work will enable the Center to respond to emerging issues, critical needs and directed programming, in a manner which will ensure flexibility and timely response to pertinent issues and technical requests. This Plan of Work will use the Center's Goals and Objectives as its foundation and will provide an outline of proposed tasks, performance measures and budget. The Operational Plan of Work will be reviewed and updated during a mid-year assessment and adjustments and revisions will be made, based on input by partners, the Center Advisory Board and project cooperators.

The Operational plan of Work will be a provided as an attachment to this Strategic plan

ENDNOTES

- i. **USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area. "Urban Forestry Five-Year Plan, 2000-2004".**
- ii. **USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area. "Urban Forestry Five-Year Plan, 1995-1999".**
- iii. **USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area. "Strategic Plan for 2000-2004".**