Mobile Community Tree Inventory (MCTI) System

Putting Technology Into the Hands of Communities

The Challenge

Until recently, collecting tree inventory data has involved the use of expensive computerized data recorders or simple paper systems to record information on public and private trees. Collecting and managing the information required equipping inventory personnel with complicated and expensive hand-held data recorders, or manually entering data from tally sheets once the field work was complete.

The Solution

The USDA Forest Service's Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry, in partnership with the University of Massachusetts/Amherst and the city of Springfield, MA, developed the Mobile Community Tree Inventory (MCTI) system. This three-tiered system is designed to utilize the latest in technology, while enabling users to select a level that matches their needs and comfort level. It incorporates hand-held Personal Digital Assistants (PDA's) as an affordable and easy to use method of data collection.

- The MCTI system originated from an idea to design a tree inventory software application that could be distributed to arborists, tree managers, city foresters, and consultants at no cost via the Internet.

- The system was designed as a stand-alone program, requiring no additional computer software.

- The system allows users to choose from three components—a paper inventory tally sheet, a desktop application for inputting collected data, and a fully computerized system incorporating desktop software and data collection software designed for PDA's.

Resulting Benefits

- The three-level system enables users to easily master each level and advance to the next.

- Users can customize the program to meet their specific needs.

> *The Mobile Community Tree Inventory system offers communities an affordable, easy to implement tree inventory system.*
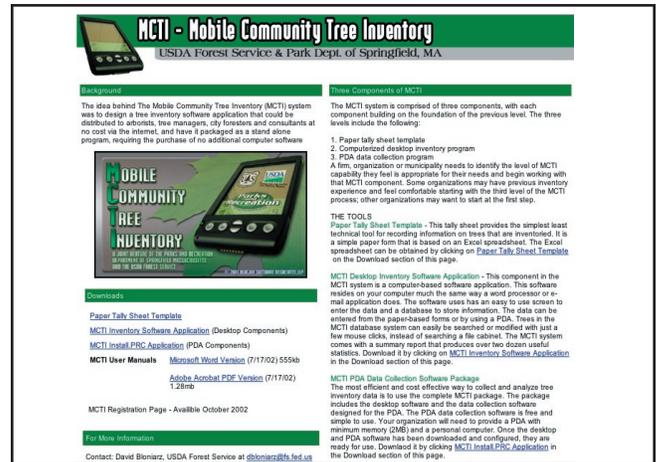
Information on the Mobile Community Tree Inventory system can be found at www.umass.edu/urbantree/palm/.

- The use of PDA's significantly increases efficiency and reduces the potential for data input error, as well as enables data to be downloaded quickly.

- The free Internet download makes the program available to a wide range of users and communities that could not otherwise afford to implement a tree inventory system.

- Users can document the overall condition of their urban forest, including species and age class distribution, tree health, and identification of hazard trees, so that a comprehensive management plan can be prepared for meeting short- and long-term goals.

Sharing Success

- Dozens of users have downloaded the program from the Internet site: www.umass.edu/urbantree/palm/. An online registration program was recently initiated to track users.

- The program was featured in the November 2001 issue of *Tree Care Industry*, published by the National Arborist Association with a circulation of 50,000.

- Workshops highlighting the program will be presented in 2002 in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire.

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For more information, contact:

Kathryn P. Maloney, Area Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Phone: 610-557-4103
Email: kmaloney@fs.fed.us

David Bloniarz, Project Coordinator
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003-4210
Phone: 413-545-3755
Email: dbloniarz@fs.fed.us