



CWSF
COUNCIL OF WESTERN
STATE FORESTERS

URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



SD Dept. of Agriculture & Natural Resources
Resource Conservation & Forestry Division



PROVIDES BENEFITS FOR ALL AMERICANS

The Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) program is **essential for enhancing community health, resilience, and vitality** through the stewardship of trees and green spaces.

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) UCF program brings the advantages of **healthy forests to communities of all sizes**, in every state across the nation. Authorized by Congress in the 1978 Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act and delivered by state forestry agencies, UCF programs provide **essential technical and financial assistance**.

In the Western region, UCF is especially **critical for small towns and rural areas** that lack access to professional tree care expertise.

“Urban and community forestry plays a vital role in the well-being and economies of all Americans, particularly in small communities. Trees in neighborhoods, community spaces, and rural areas bring people together, offer recreation opportunities, create jobs, and support healthy, active communities.”

JOHN ERIXSON

State Forester | Nebraska Forest Service




Community forests, consisting of trees and green space, improve the lives of Americans in communities of all sizes. Trees in these landscapes **reduce municipal costs, improve environmental and human health, and bolster local economies**.¹

UCF programs ensure all communities have access to these substantial benefits.

¹ Kathleen L Wolf. "Trees in the Small City Retail Business District: Comparing Resident and Visitor Perceptions." Journal of Forestry (2005). <https://doi.org/10.1093/JOF/103.8.390>. Kathleen L Wolf. "PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE URBAN FOREST IN INNER-CITY BUSINESS DISTRICTS." Journal of arboriculture, 29 (2003): 117-126. Kathleen L Wolf. "Business District Streetscapes, Trees, and Consumer Response." Journal of Forestry (2005). <https://doi.org/10.1093/JOF/103.8.396>.



 North Dakota Forest Service

DRIVES ECONOMIC GROWTH

A 2017 study² by the University of Nebraska found that the direct economic impact nationally from private sector industry and government was \$35.4 billion in urban forestry sales or spending. The total economic footprint of these activities was \$64.0 billion and directly provided 501,600 jobs.



In Western states, health, property, and environmental benefits from community forests totaled **\$19 trillion** and supported **135,119 jobs**.

Communities enrolled in Tree City USA invested an average of \$5.18 per capita, highlighting how the small investment in the UCF program leverages local investment, improves community well-being, and helps drive economic impact.

LOWERS COSTS FOR FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Forests are an important part of a community's infrastructure. With proper planning, trees and other plants can provide important functions, such as reduced stormwater runoff, **lowering costs for federal, state, and local governments.**

- In the Colorado Front Range, existing tree cover was estimated to reduce runoff by 52.9 million ft³ (1.5 million m³), valued at \$3.2 million annually ([American Forests 2001a](#)).
- In Oregon's Willamette/Lower Columbia region, existing canopy (24%) reduced runoff by 8.5 billion ft³ (240.7 million m³). The annualized value of this benefit was \$140 million ([American Forests 2001b](#)).

The UCF program provides essential financial, technical, and educational support so communities can reduce long-term costs and maximize benefits from their investments.

² Thompson, Dr. Eric, Dr. Mitch Herian, and Dr. David Rosenbaum. 2021. "The Economic Footprint and Quality-of-Life Benefits of Urban Forestry in the United States." Bureau of Business Research Department of Economics, University of Nebraska Lincoln.
<https://www.arborday.org/media/17716/download>.



STRENGTHENS LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Since the passage of the 1978 Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act, Western state forestry agencies, the Forest Service, and local partners have worked together to strengthen forest resources within communities.

In 2024, UCF programs in the West have provided technical assistance to more than 1,500 communities ranging in size from 100 to over 500,000, reaching nearly 60 million people.

In 2024, private citizens volunteered nearly 400,000 hours on community forestry projects, showcasing the impact and popularity of UCF programs.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO
1,583 COMMUNITIES
REACHING NEARLY
60 MILLION PEOPLE



396,661
VOLUNTEER HOURS
ON COMMUNITY FORESTRY
PROJECTS



COMMUNITY FORESTS
SUPPORTED
135,119 JOBS

UCF programs provide technical, educational, and financial assistance and resources to empower communities to:

Improve Public Safety:

- Support local efforts to **reduce damage and losses** from at-risk trees.
- **Reduce wildfire risk** in the wildland-urban interface.
- **Strengthen storm resilience** by training communities on proper tree placement, planting, and care.
- Reduce flooding by supporting planting projects that **reduce stormwater runoff**.
- **Mitigate heat impacts** on human health by preserving existing tree canopy and planting new trees.

Improve Community Forest Health:

- Conduct **tree inventories** to help local communities make informed decisions about their forest resources and reduce costly reactive management.
- Train **arboriculture and nursery professionals** to promote tree care practices that improve the survivability of trees.
- Assist communities in developing ordinances and **community forestry management plans**.
- **Increase public understanding** of trees' energy conservation, economic, social, environmental, and psychological values.
- Promote the **economic utilization of urban wood**.

Strengthen Small Town Vitality:

- Provide **hands-on technical assistance** to small and rural communities that lack the funds or ability to allocate trained staff.
- **Assist communities** in organizing and implementing forestry projects and programs.

Enhance Human Health:

- **Ensure trees are planted and maintained** in the landscape where people live, work, and play.
- Enhance **recreational opportunities**.
- Boost community pride by administering the **Tree City USA Programs**.



PEOPLE ARE ESSENTIAL



 KS | Amanda Gehin

Trees rely on people to thrive. UCF work is grounded in relationships, takes time, and supports communities in safely managing trees in places with extreme conditions, critical infrastructure, and human activity.

One tree is lost for every two planted due to poor planning, improper planting, extreme weather, and the growing impact of pests and diseases.

The UCF program provides technical and financial assistance to ensure that communities can protect their investments and maximize the benefits of their trees.

A vibrant UCF program brings capacity to rural communities and increases economic, ecological, and social value to communities of all sizes.