

# Metropolitan Initiative

USDA Forest Service  
Northeastern Area  
State and Private Forestry

*Bringing Forestry to People Through Collaborative Stewardship*



## **Description:**

The goal of the Metropolitan Initiative is to energize and enhance partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies and nonprofit organizations to improve the quality of life and the environment in major metropolitan areas. Working in low-income and under-served communities, the Forest Service will contribute to retaining and attracting new residents and business as a strategy to combat the rapid conversion of existing forestland to urban housing and industrial developments.

## **Key Issues:**

Professional urban foresters working in large cities are charged with the care and management of complex inventories of heavily used and difficult to maintain urban forest resources. Yet urban forestry in large cities has not received sufficient local attention or funding necessary to sustain a healthy green infrastructure. Moreover, while large cities share similar management issues, political challenges, complex technology needs, and overwhelming outreach opportunities, they have little opportunity to network with each other. The Metropolitan Initiative will:

- Improve information and communication to and among local partners by promoting awareness, building understanding and generating support for urban greening initiatives across the region.
- Enhance capacity to address emerging issues, respond to local problems and strengthen programs.
- Promote comprehensive resource management strategies and practices addressing critical urban landscapes and improving urban forest health.
- Strengthen outreach and environmental equity through new and existing partnerships with underserved and non-traditional communities.

## **Accomplishments:**

### *Open Space Planning Group--Philadelphia*

- Created by the city's Managing Director's Office and convened by FS staff, this group responds to the growing need for coordination among the many City agencies engaged in open space projects. This group includes representatives from 11 city agencies, and multiple State and federal agencies. Monthly meetings provide an opportunity to share information, facilitate project coordination, and develop new funding sources and partnership opportunities.

### *Open Accessible Space Information System Cooperative (OASIS)—NYC*

- OASIS was developed by a FS-led coalition of more than 40 nonprofit organizations, private companies, government agencies, and academic institutions. The OASIS website enables users to identify and evaluate open space resources by combining new computer mapping software, large data sets, and local information about trees, green space and other environmental resources. The software has enabled groups to identify vacant land and other opportunities for tree planting and open space improvements. [www.oasisnyc.net](http://www.oasisnyc.net) has been accessed over one million times in the past 12 months.

### *Inner City Grant Program*

- Over the past two years, the Northeastern Area has worked with its State partners to target funds to some of its most challenging environments in the region's inner cities. Efforts have focused on ecological assessments, urban greening, and restoration activities in places as diverse as Davenport, Baltimore, Detroit, Boston, and Buffalo. Additional projects were funded in Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Springfield (Mass.), and East Chicago. In Syracuse, New York, funding supported Cornell Cooperative Extension to engage youth in citywide efforts to inventory and report on urban tree health and condition. The project will result in a video documentary to spur similar projects across the region.

## Budget History:

(\$ Thousands)					
	<b>FY 2000</b>	<b>FY 2001</b>	<b>FY 2002</b>	<b>FY 2003</b>	<b>FY 2004</b>
FS Funding	\$0	\$800	\$775	\$2,395	\$2,380

## Future Direction:

- *Urban Ecology Collaborative:* In partnership with Northeastern Research Station and Northeastern Area, nonprofit partners and city agencies from District of Columbia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York, New Haven, and Boston have formed a model collaborative to share advanced technology and strategies for vacant land acquisition, tree planting and management, and stewardship training. An assessment is underway to determine city needs and expand the group to include additional cities in the Northeast and Midwest.
- *Data Collection:* Survey and compile information from major cities about street and park trees, tree cover, municipal budgets, miles of roads and profiles of non-profit partners for each city.
- Target financial assistance to ensure large city urban forestry departments and managers have the best technology tools and training to manage large inventories of street and park trees.
- Identify the special training needs and create opportunities for urban forest managers and nonprofit partners in large cities. Provide scholarships to appropriate conferences with Society of Municipal Arborists, International Society of Arboriculture, and American Forests.
- Fund research focused on developing and testing best management practices and technology for street tree, park tree and woodland management for large city park and public works agencies.
- Invest in replication of OASIS technology to other large cities.
- Work with the nonprofit community to elevate municipal urban forestry programs in local hierarchy of needs. Identify organizations and build their capacity to advocate for tree care programs.

**Kathryn Maloney**, Director  
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200  
Newtown Square, PA 19073  
610-557-4103 (4177-FAX)  
kmaloney@fs.fed.us

**Robin Morgan**, Asst. Director  
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200  
Newtown Square, PA 19073  
610-557-4103 (4177-FAX)  
rmorgan@fs.fed.us

**Phil Rodbell**  
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200  
Newtown Square, PA  
(610) 557-4133 (4136-FAX)  
prodbell@fs.fed.us

<http://na.fs.fed.us>

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