



Montana Urban and Community Forestry Association
PO Box 780
Manhattan, MT 59741

DNRC-Forestry Division
Bob Harrington, State Forester
2705 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

12/23/16

RE: State of the State Urban Forest 2016

Dear Mr. Harrington,

Urban forestry is alive in Montana. 2016 has been a good year for urban and community forestry (UCF) in Montana and for the Montana Urban and Community Forestry Association (MUCFA). \$109,000 of state and federal grant funding administered by Department of Natural Resource and Conservation (DNRC) Urban and Community Forestry program was utilized to leverage \$185,000 from Montana communities for completing urban forestry projects in 2016. The City of Billings received a national award from the Arbor Day Foundation in 2016 for having the best Arbor Day Celebration in the United States. This fall Patrick Plantenberg from Townsend, received 2016 Arborist of the Year from the International Society of Arboriculture Rocky Mountain Chapter; an award that has never been received by anyone in Montana. The City of Bozeman is in the process of advertising for its first City Forester, made possible through an Urban Forest Management Plan that DNRC assisted in funding. Also, the City of Helena added a new aerial lift truck to its fleet in 2016.

In 2016, MUCFA became a nonprofit organization, developed a dues structure, and is raising funds to return to Montana Communities for urban forestry projects and to provide funding for arborist training. MUCFA is building a media campaign to engage the citizens of Montana about the importance of urban forestry. The campaign is founded on three pillars: Plant Trees Correctly, Trees Have Value, and Trees Require Care. MUCFA will play a significant role in planning the 8th annual Northern Rockies Tree School to be held in Billings in September 2017. This regional conference has grown to approximately 200 participants each year providing world-class instruction in the field of arboriculture. MUCFA also completed a survey of

Montana communities in 2016 that showed funding and urban forest personnel are their biggest challenges to urban forestry management in Montana. Although funding will always be a challenge the survey also revealed that lack of knowledge and having a UCF presence are needed. These are two areas DNRC and MUCFA can improve on.

Although the future for urban and community forestry is bright, there are still many challenges in Montana. In the recent statewide Urban Forest Assessment, Davey Resource Group concluded that 45% of urban trees in Montana are in a condition of fair, poor, dead or dieing and are in need of maintenance. Many of our urban forests were planted around the turn of the 20th century and are reaching their life expectancy all at the same time. Also, the threat of emerald ash borer and Asian long-horned beetle are of great concern as ash makes up 40 % of eastern Montana community forests, and maples make up 22 % of western Montana communities.

A majority of work done in the name of urban and community forestry would not be possible without the DNRC UCF program. Yet MUCFA is concerned with the termination of urban and community forestry help for communities in the southcentral and eastern side of Montana, even though the federal Farm Bill funds 40% of DNRC foresters' wages in this region for urban and community forestry. Communities like Big Timber, Roundup, and Forsyth count on DNRC foresters for expertise in managing their urban forests. In the past 2 years several UCF staff and support staff have been eliminated. Without DNRC's help, many smaller Montana communities have nowhere to turn for help and support. This is frustrating for communities and tree boards and people just give up trying to improve their urban forests. In the long run our urban forests will greatly suffer without DNRC's help and commitment.

Trees are an integral part of the infrastructure of our Montana communities, and like all infrastructure, repairs are needed before much of what was planted over 100 years ago disappears. MUCFA can be a significant partner for the communities of Montana, and is more than capable and willing to help ensure the future of our communities' forests. We welcome your ideas on how we can improve UCF in Montana and better serve the communities of our great State of Montana.

Sincerely,

Robert Logar,

MUCFA Secretary/Treasurer

Cc: Jan Davis- USFS, John Tubbs- DNRC, Amanda Egan- USFS