



Montana Urban and Community Forestry Association
393 Ponderosa Lane
Kalispell, MT 59901

DNRC-Forestry Division
Sonya Germann, State Forester
2705 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

January 20, 2019

RE: MUCFA Montana Urban Forest Update 2018

Dear Mrs. Germann,

On behalf of MUCFA I would like to say Happy New Year. We hope 2019 is filled with many tree successes for the State of Montana and its urban forest communities. As we look back at 2018, it is important to evaluate where we are, and where we are going. As one of MUCFA's roles is to guide the State of Montana's Urban Forestry Program, we send you this report about MUCFA's accomplishments with DNRC's help, challenges, and where we would like to see attention placed in 2019.

One of the biggest challenges facing Montana's urban forest communities is Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). MUCFA continues to work with partners like APHIS, the Federal Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, to monitor for the EAB. EAB is not yet in Montana but is now in 35 US states. Thanks to a DNRC Urban Forestry Program report we can see that many Montana communities' trees east of the continental divide will be decimated by the insect. Communities like Laurel, where ash trees account for 68% of the tree canopy, and Havre where ash species make up 70% of the tree canopy, are some of the greatest concern. Now is the time to start preparing Montana communities by diversifying tree species and removing ash trees that are in poor health or are in bad locations. Let's modify DNRC's Program Development grant objectives to stimulate communities to put matching money towards ash removal and replacement with diverse species and prioritize those with the most to lose.

MUCFA spends a large portion of its funding on training citizens, tree boards, and arborists about all things trees. Over this last year numerous trainings have taken place: Growing Greener Communities Tree Board Retreat in Lewistown, Northern Rockies Tree School in Billings, Montana's Tree Worker Academy in Bozeman, Tree Risk Assessment Qualification and Requalification in Helena, Aerial Rescue training in Missoula, and Saluting Branches in Helena. MUCFA continues sponsorship of green industry groups such as Montana Trails, Recreation, and Parks Association, the Montana Nursery and Landscape Association, and the Association of Montana Turf, Ornamental and Pest Professions. MUCFA helped

sponsor a Trees and the Law session for city attorneys at the Montana League of Cities and Towns Annual Conference in Butte. Montana tree workers have access to quality education in Montana in large part because MUCFA exists.

In the past year, MUCFA has introduced its own grant funding program. In its first year, five grants were awarded. Funding helped the City of Sidney install a tree nursery where they can grow tree species that are sometimes hard to come by, helping to diversify Sidney's tree canopy. The Garfield Conservation District in Jordan Montana received a grant to plant trees at their fairgrounds. Harlowton received funding to put on an educational workshop for the community. Hamilton was able to buy a pump to help water downtown trees, and Dillion received a media grant to help print professional quality brochures for their Trail of Trees tour.

MUCFA also helped leverage grant funding by providing pass through grants to Missoula, Columbia Falls, and Roundup by working with the Dennis Washington Foundation, NorthWestern Energy, and the Musselshell Community Foundation.

MUCFA members worked with radio stations across the state to develop an ad promoting trees and tree health in the community. These ads ran for several weeks in the larger Montana communities. MUCFA also maintains an active Facebook page that has 700 likes from Montana citizens. MUCFA hosts a website with lots of great Montana tree information at MUCFA.com.

In 2018, MUCFA launched an awards program to recognize the best of Montana related to trees. Last year Steve Riley from Billings was recognized as the Arborist of the Year. Tizer Gardens from Boulder was awarded the Outstanding Media Award. NorthWestern Energy and Scott Bernhardt were named the Outstanding Forestry Corporate Sponsor of the year. The City of Roundup received Outstanding Project of the Year, and Townsend Montana received the outstanding Urban Forest Community of the Year.

When we look at the challenges facing urban forestry, funding and providing technical expertise always rise to the top. These are two challenges that both MUCFA and DNRC can work towards together. Please encourage DNRC UCF Service Foresters to attend community tree board meetings and invite MUCFA members to attend as well. Please encourage UCF staff to seek out new urban forestry revenue streams. As federal funds continue to be tougher and tougher to obtain and the need for funding continues to increase we need to look more toward State and private funding sources.

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,



Fred Bicha,
MUCFA Chair

Cc: Jamie Kirby- DNRC, Matt Arno- DRNC, John Tubbs- DNRC, Amanda Egan- USFS, Jan Davis- USFS