

Description Urban forests, the trees and forests in and around towns and cities, absorb water. These patches of forest and the trees that line streets can help provide some of the storm water management required in an urban setting. Urban forests also help break up a landscape of impervious cover, provide small but essential green spaces, and link walkways and trails.

General Information Urban forestry provides numerous environmental and storm water benefits. These include the absorption of carbon dioxide by trees, reduction of temperature, and provision of habitat for urban wildlife. Urban forests can also act as natural storm water management areas by filtering pollutant gases, airborne particulates, sediment, nitrogen, phosphorous, and pesticides and by absorption of water. Urban forestry also reduces noise levels, provides recreational benefits, and increases property values.

Successful urban forestry requires a conservation plan for individual trees as well as forest areas larger than 10,000 feet². A local forest or tree ordinance is one technique for achieving conservation, and when specific measures to protect and manage these areas are included, urban forests and trees can also help reduce storm water management needs in urban areas.

Increasing the urban forest is a useful technique for mitigating the effects of past practices. Communities faced with requirements for pollutant reductions in storm water runoff should seriously consider tree-planting programs. Trees and other vegetation can be incorporated into community open space, street rights-of-way, parking lot islands, and other landscaped areas.

One of the biggest limitations to urban forestry is development pressure. Ordinances, conservation easements, and other techniques that are designed into a management program can help alleviate future development pressures. A forest preservation ordinance is one way to set design standards outlining how a forest should be preserved and managed. An urban forestry plan can also be developed and include measures to establish, conserve, and/or reestablish preservation areas.

Additional Resources American Forests, no date. *CITYgreen*. Available on American Forests website.

National Arbor Foundation, *Tree Guide*. Available on website.

National Park Service, 1995. *Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails and Greenway Corridors*.

Thompson, J.W. and K. Sorvig, 2000. *Sustainable Landscape Construction: A Guide to Green Building Outdoors*, Island Press, Washington, D.C.

Figure 30-1 Urban forestry – tree functions.

