Community Forestry Program

CFMP Guidelines

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State of New Jersey

Department of Environmental Protection

NJ Forest Service

CFMP Sections

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Preamble

The following Community Forest Management Plan guidelines bring important changes to the New Jersey Urban & Community Forestry (NJUCF) program. Inventory data, with associated minimum requirements, are now required as a basis for plan development. The new guidelines also include new mapping requirements and a framework which centers on management goals, forest structure and function, and participatory planning. These updates are described below and in the companion document, the CFMP Guidelines Guidance, which is meant to provide additional information, resources, and examples.

As a final note, in the program's experience, the most successful local government programs work with or employ a qualified tree professional to assist in the plan development process, as well as the plan implementation stage of urban & community forest management. While this is not a requirement, the NJUCF program strongly recommends that local governments use the resources of a qualified tree professional throughout the planning and management process. If you are looking for a professional, here are some resources that may assist you:

- [NJ Approved Consulting Foresters](#)
- [NJ Licensed Tree Experts (LTE)](#)
- [International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborists](#)
- [Society of American Foresters (SAF) Certified Professionals](#)

Section 1. Introduction and Background

a. Mission Statement

Provide a brief statement that describes the purpose of the creation of your local government's Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP). Plans should address the protection, enhancement, and safety of the local urban and community forest, as well as the social, economic, health and aesthetic benefits associated with a well-managed tree resource.

b. Liability Statement

Explain how liability has been, and/or will be, addressed or reduced with a statement of loss reduction and protection resulting from the development of this Community Forest Management Plan. This statement will provide the link between the plan and the legislation: the New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act (N.J.S.A. 13: 1L-17.1 et. seq.).

Communities are encouraged to use the sample found in Appendix 2 as the core of their Liability Statement. The statement should be expanded and customized to reflect the community's specific goals and needs.

c. Community Overview

i. Overview

Provide a brief description of your municipality or county *in relation to its tree resource*. This includes local geography, land use, and other relevant factors that influence the establishment and survival of your community's trees. Briefly describe the nature of engagement between the local government, residents, and the community's trees. Include a copy of any tree ordinance or municipal land use law that relates to the implementation of this CFMP.

ii. Community Maps

Provide, at minimum, maps that display:

- the extent and boundaries of your community,
- canopy cover,
- land use / land cover,
- Overburdened/EJ communities.

To generate these maps, you can use a resource from Rutgers University titled NJ Forest Adapt, or another similar resource. Please use the NJDEP Office of Environmental Justice's EJMAP, to show location data for overburdened communities. You should also include other relevant maps, such as tree inventory points if you have them. Other maps or data to consider include heat island effects, impervious surfaces, and tree equity score. Discussion of this information can be brief in this section and should be expanded upon in other relevant sections.

iii. History, Accomplishments, & Barriers to Success

Provide an overview of relevant past management of your urban forest, including community tree planting, pruning, removal and hazard identification practices. Describe and outline past accomplishments and barriers to achieving community goals for your tree resource. If your community has written previous CFMPs, assess how those practices and accomplishments supported and/or deviated from CFMP goals and why.

d. Urban Forest Structure, Composition, and Trends

Tree inventory data must be the basis for urban forest management under the NJUCF program guidelines. This includes trees on public property that are municipally owned and/or maintained. Forested parcels within municipal/county boundaries that will be managed should be inventoried.

NJUCF strongly recommends that tree inventories are collected by qualified professionals. However, inventories that include advanced condition ratings or risk assessments must be completed by a qualified professional. Proactive and informed management enables your community to perpetuate a sustainable tree resource over time. In this section, include and describe tree inventory data collected in your community. Provide a description of the results, including any notable trends (spatial or temporal). Mention how these results will directly influence urban forest management in this plan and in the future. Do trends in the structure, composition, condition, or distribution conform to community goals (as set in this CFMP and/or the previous CFMP(s), if any)? If not, how do they differ and what management changes are planned to narrow the gap between present and desired future conditions?

Note that tree inventory data may be complete, partial, or sample-based:

- complete may include all municipal/county-owned trees in your community (e.g., street trees in the right-of-way and/or open canopy park trees);
- partial may include a particular section or set of sections in your community; and
- sample-based may include a representative sample of street and/or open canopy park trees. This category may also be the most appropriate for stands of trees in forested areas.

The type of inventory, the overall extent, and the variables collected may be limited by available funding and resources, so the most appropriate option for your community should be determined in conjunction with relevant stakeholders and/or your consultant. However, inventories must meet the minimum requirements (see Appendix 5).

The inventory data collected (Appendix 5) should be expanded upon in this section: tree condition, size/age class distribution, taxonomic diversity (family, genus, species; 10-20-30 rule), species-site compatibility and suitability (Right Tree, Right Place) and tree characteristics (e.g., large-statured, small ornamentals). Keep in mind that these data are crucial for proactive and informed management of your urban forest and should thus directly inform your Overall Program Goals (Section 1e) as well as your Elements, Objectives, and Action Items (Section 4a). It is important to consider the area for a partial inventory, as this area must directly correspond to

the area where management will occur. In other words, it is essential to know what you have, and where, in order to specify and implement the steps needed to reach what you want.

Additionally, repeat inventories allow you to track trends over time and assess change in your system. This information can bring items to your attention, such as species-specific declines due to pests and pathogens, and can also enable you to compare outcomes to your expectations and assess the efficacy of management strategies. For subsequent inventories, describe any notable trends in the structure, composition, or health of the forest since prior inventories.

If you start with a partial inventory, you can build on that data over time by assessing different areas through subsequent partial inventories. This approach can help build a full picture of your urban forest. For example, one quarter of the area could be inventoried every year, and over four years this would result in a complete inventory.

e. Overall Program Goals

Provide overarching goals that support the future vision of your community and urban forest. Goals should be broad and general desired future conditions of your community, program, and its trees, while **elements**, **objectives**, and **action items** (Section 4a) detail specific future conditions and associated actions to help you achieve these overall program goals.

f. Plan Connections and Other Considerations

This section should reference connections between the goals of this plan and other plans relevant to the management of your community's tree resource. This can include your municipality's Master Plan, Stormwater Management Plan, Open Space Plan, the State Forest Action Plan, Emergency Response Plan/Storm Readiness, Wildfire Protection Plan, the local utilities' vegetation management plan, etc. In addition, CFMPs should include a storm readiness, response, and recovery component. As an example, a potential goal in your CFMP might entail coordinating ongoing stormwater mitigation efforts with your local emergency management council, the county office of emergency management, and regional utility authority. Municipalities and counties should also be considering innovative ways to utilize wood waste (examples have included local art guild tie-ins, park benches, scout projects, etc.) and could include wood utilization as a long-term goal. A helpful reference for considering reduction of impacts of impervious cover on water quality through green infrastructure can be found on the Rutgers Water Resources program here. Also, if applicable, mention considerations that may affect urban forest management in your community (e.g., areas under jurisdiction of another governing body, easements, etc.).

Other considerations may include natural (forested) areas that have unique attributes and/or significance that may warrant special attention and consideration for management, which can be done through a separate forest stewardship plan. Consider threats to the urban forest that stand out in your community, such as development pressure, invasive species, excessive deer population, habitat connectivity, and/or recreation.

Section 2. Community Forestry Program Capacity

a. Community Forestry Program Administration

Identify the people and groups responsible for overseeing the management of your urban forest and describe the working relationship between them. Also, identify the designation of the local tree commission or comparable organization (e.g., Shade Tree Commission, Shade Tree Committee, Shade Tree Advisory Board, Environmental Commission, Green Team).

Provide an organizational chart that shows the above information in graphical form. Include the Mayor and Council (or comparable municipal/county officials), Department of Public Works (DPW), shade tree organization, the community residents, and all the steps in-between regarding tree resource management.

Describe how the municipality or county processes and responds to tree service requests. If applicable, mention whether private tree care firms are contracted to do tree pruning, removals or planting activities.

b. Partnerships (NGOs, nonprofit organizations, interdepartmental)

Building capacity in your community through the creation and maintenance of partnerships can be very beneficial for tree resource management. Partnerships can allow you to spread out your workload, increase efficiency, create community connections, build support for your program, and ultimately, more effectively achieve your goals. Describe the entities within your community that engage in management or stewardship of your urban forest and if and how they collaborate. This includes departmental connections (e.g., DPW, engineering, enforcement), governmental commissions/committees, non-governmental organizations, and nonprofit organizations. Does your community elicit input and/or feedback from interdepartmental and/or organizational partners? What role do they play?

c. Training

Include any tree-focused training and certifications that your administration or your partnership members may have; consider the following individuals: Shade Tree volunteers and commissioners, public employees responsible for tree maintenance, people identified in the program administration organization, your CORE trained individuals, and your consultant.

Identify any specific training needed to achieve the goals listed in this CFMP and improve the maintenance of your community's tree resource.

d. Budget

Submit a five year itemized budget table as a baseline to identify all available resources, including financial, volunteer, and any other in-kind services that may be used to implement this CFMP (you may fill out the budget form in Appendix 3 or create your own). You may use a previous year's budget as a reference and adjust for anticipated changes and external funding sources, such as NJUCF program or other grants. Note: this budget is meant to be a projection of estimated funds, not a definite statement of future appropriations.

To quantify the value of volunteer time using the average hourly rate in New Jersey, you may refer to the website of the [Independent Sector](). Provide a narrative description of these resources including significant constraints, challenges, and/or needs within your budget.

e. Equipment

Provide a brief description of the equipment your community uses for tree resource management implementation, such as watering trucks, chainsaws, etc. List any equipment needs.

Section 3. Community Engagement and Well-being

Describe past, present, and desired future community involvement in urban and community forest management. This includes, but is not limited to the role of volunteers, media, education, outreach, and community engagement initiatives.

In our experience, in addition to working with a consultant, community forestry programs that engage with the public and involve community members as much as possible are the most successful. Given this information, consider the following questions in this section:

- How has your community forestry program engaged with your community in the past? Are there significant challenges or resistances? Is there a way to improve community relations?
- How was this CFMP developed and who was involved (e.g., consulting forester, STAC)? How/has input been solicited from elected officials and key municipal staff?
- Do your community engagement efforts elicit input and/or feedback from members of the public during planning processes? How could this process be improved? What steps could be taken to engage diverse community members with a particular focus on residents of neighborhoods lacking trees and overburdened communities?
- How will the approved plan be disseminated?

Trees provide benefits that positively affect human health and well-being, such as heat mitigation (shade and transpiration cooling), stormwater reduction, aesthetic value, improved recovery times in hospitals, and more. However, these benefits are greatest when the right trees are planted in the right place, in the right way, and are maintained throughout their lifespan. The above points to the importance of the equitable distribution of, and access to, the tree resource in your community – specifically, the distribution of tree canopy as well as the distribution of management efforts, such as maintenance, removals, and plantings.

- Are trees and green spaces distributed evenly in your community (refer to the canopy cover map from Section 1c.ii)? If not, where are the sections that lack canopy or well-maintained trees?
- Are there any distinct similarities or differences between these areas in terms of land use, or characteristics of the residents (e.g., median household income in the neighborhood)?
- Are there any barriers to improving this distribution? If so, can these barriers be overcome? If not, how can this distribution be improved?

Section 4. Plan Implementation

a. Elements, Objectives, and Action Items

Elements are components of your urban and community forest you'd like to manage in this 5-year plan. Communities should refer to the Community Forest Management Plan Elements in Appendix 4 and ensure each of the main numbered categories are captured and addressed in the CFMP. The lettered sub-categories should be similarly considered for inclusion in this plan as applicable.

Objectives are milestones that will help you reach your Overall Program Goals (Section 1e) under the frame of each Element. Action Items are specific, measurable actions nested under each Objective that will allow you to achieve these Objectives for each Element. Elements, Objectives, and Action Items:

- are not limited to your tree resource, but when implemented, should help to support your urban forest;
- should pertain to the sections contained in this document (e.g., Plan Connections, Partnerships, Training, Equipment, Community Engagement and Well-being, etc.), and in the Plan Elements (see Appendix 4); and
- should be based on your community's preferences, needs and goals, in consultation with your stakeholders and consultant(s).

For examples, see Section 3 in the CFMP Guidelines Guidance document.

Note: Elements, Objectives, and Action Items that pertain to tree resource management must be explicitly tied to, and informed by Section 1d. Urban Forest Structure, Composition, and Trends, which includes tree inventory data summaries and findings.

b. Activity Schedule

This section should provide the anticipated timeline for Plan Implementation. Include all 5 years of management. All the action items mentioned in Section 4a should be included in your activity schedule. It may be helpful for your community to list this section by year of management, or by individual Elements.

Community Forestry Program

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Municipal/County Information Form

Municipality _____

County _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Contact Name and Title _____

Phone # _____

Fax # and E-mail _____

Organization Name _____

Mayor/County Commissioner's

Signature _____

Date of Management Plan

Submission _____

Time Period Covered in

Management Plan _____

Official Office Use Only

The above-named municipality/county has made formal application to the New Jersey Forestry Service. I am pleased to advise you that after our review, the NJ Forestry Service has concluded that this plan meets the standards set forth by the State and the NJ Community Forestry Council and is approved for the period covered. Signed_____   State Forester   Approved Date

Appendix 2. Liability Statement Sample

"Although street trees are an asset to the community, it is inevitable that as they mature, they will require care, maintenance and eventual replacement. Care and maintenance, in addition to planting "the right tree in the right place," can help ensure that community trees not only contribute to the environmental and economic vitality of the area, but also reduce the potential hazards to public safety. However, [*insert community limitations and needs*], thus our community may not be able to meet each need of our community forest immediately. Therefore, it is the intent of this plan to focus available resources toward the greatest need in a step-by-step fashion, working towards a healthy forest with commensurate reductions in risk to public safety.

[*Insert relevant program goals, and/or community forest management objectives/action items.*]

We feel, by taking the steps outlined in the Management Plan, including (*insert relevant objectives/action items*), we will garner public support for plan implementation and demonstrate the long-term benefits to the environment and public safety.

We also want to become more proactive in the management and care of our trees. Through inventories and hazard assessments, we will position our Shade Tree Commission (*or name of organization or agency*) to take corrective action prior to structural tree failure and other hazardous tree related conditions. It is acknowledged that not all hazardous conditions will be predicted. Adequate maintenance and care will reduce the probability of tree failure, but unexpected events may still occur.

Following this Management Plan will demonstrate that [*name of Municipality/County*] is devoting reasonable levels of resources in a planned manner to reduce the number of tree related accidents and thereby reduce its exposure to liabilities and increase public safety."

Appendix 3. Budget Form

Statement of 5-year Tree Budget		CFMP Budget
Administration	Municipal Salaries	
	Fringe	
	Indirect Costs	
	Volunteer Contribution (Rate can be found at www.independentsector.org)	
	Other	
UCF Stewardship	Planting	
	Pruning	
	Removal	
	Insect/Disease Management	
	Stump Removal	
	Other	
Education and Outreach	Training and Education (Municipal/County Employee)	
	Training and Education (Volunteer)	
	Public Outreach	
	Other	
Total		

Appendix 4. Community Forest Management Plan Elements

1. Training and Education
   a. CORE Training
   b. Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
   c. Other
2. Community Forest Ordinance(s)
   a. Establishing Ordinance (*Establishes Shade Tree Commission*)
   b. Supplemental Ordinance (*Sets the regulations for shade trees in the community*)
3. Tree Resource Management
   a. Sample/Partial Inventory of Street and/or Park Trees
   b. Comprehensive Inventory of Street and/or Park Trees
   c. Tree Risk Assessment
   d. Tree Maintenance
      i. Pruning
      ii. Watering
      iii. Mulching
      iv. Tree Removals
      v. Other
   e. Tree Planting
   f. Insect and Disease Management
   g. Tree and/or Mulch Utilization
   h. Soil Quality Assessment / Improvement
   i. Tree Bed Improvement
      i. Tree Bed Expansion / Concrete Removal
      ii. Enhanced Tree Beds
      iii. Structural Soil
      iv. Tree Protection (e.g., deer protection, tree pit guards)
4. Community and Capacity
   a. Building Capacity
      i. Partnerships
      ii. Community Involvement and Participation
   b. Education and Outreach Events (e.g., Arbor Day)
   c. Outreach Materials
5. Disaster Planning
   a. Storm Readiness, Response, and Recovery
   b. Wildfire Protection
      i. Prepare a [Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#)

Appendix 5. Inventory Documents & Resources

Minimum Inventory Requirements for Street Trees and other Open Canopy Trees:

- Species – Common and Scientific name
- DBH – 2-inch increments
- Current Height – Small (less than 25 feet), Medium (25-50 feet), and Large (greater than 50 feet)
- Potential Height (expected at maturity) – Small (less than 25 feet), Medium (25-50 feet), and Large (greater than 50 feet)
- Condition (5-1) – The rating scale: 5 = Good, 4 = Fair, 3 = Poor, 2 = Very Poor, and 1 = Dying/Dead.
    - Good condition constitutes: <10% dieback, missing crown, visible structural damage, and injury from diseases and pests
    - Fair: 10% -25%
    - Poor: 25-50%
    - Very poor: 50-75%
    - Dying/dead: >75%
        - **Note**: This is NOT an assessment of risk. It is recommended that risk assessments be conducted by an ISA TRAQ certified NJ Licensed Tree Expert.
- Location – GPS Coordinates and/or closest street address
- Notes – Sidewalk conflict, wire conflict, insect/disease issues etc.
- *Strongly recommended, but not required* – Vacant planting space

Minimum Inventory Requirements for Forested Areas:

For parcels within municipal/county boundaries that are considered forested and will be managed as forested stands using silvicultural approaches (rather than individual trees), inventory criteria will ensure the ability to collect the data needed to fulfill the stand criteria required in N.J.A.C. 18:15 – 2.10 (5). These criteria constitute the minimum stand data required for a Woodland Management Plan for the Farmland Assessment program administered by the NJ Forest Service. A statement describing each defined forest stand shall be provided incorporating the following:

i. The number of acres;
ii. The species composition including overstory and understory;
iii. The general condition and quality;
iv. The structure including age classes, DBH classes, and crown classes;
v. The overall site quality;
vi. The condition and species composition of advanced regeneration when applicable; and
vii. The stocking levels, growth rates, and volumes.

Appendix 6. Glossary of Terms

	Term	Description
A	Action Items	Specific, measurable actions nested under each Objective that will allow you to achieve these Objectives for each Element.
	Annual Accomplishment Report	Records and holds counties and municipalities accountable for Community Forest Management Plan implementation. A complete Annual Accomplishment Report detailing the previous year's accomplishments under the plan, with a *signed cover sheet*, must be submitted at the end of each calendar year by *February 15th*.
	Approved Status (Accreditation)	Achieved when a county or municipality is in complete compliance with the New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Act. A county or municipality must meet four requirements each year (January 1 through December 31): (1) A current Community Forest Management Plan, (2) Eight Continuing Education Credits or CEUs, (3) CORE Training, and (4) an Annual Accomplishment Report due February 15th of each year.
C	Canopy Cover	The layer of tree leaves, needles, branches, and stems that cover the ground area from an aerial perspective.
	Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP)	A five-year management plan created by a county or municipality to manage urban forest resources.
	Continuing Education Units (CEUs)	A minimum of eight CEUs across no less than two individuals (i.e., municipal representatives) are required annually to maintain approved status. CEU credits are acquired for the county or municipality, not the individual (as is the case with CORE Training).
	Community Forest	A forest owned and generally managed by a community, the members of which share its benefits.
	CORE Training	One of the two educational requirements in receiving approved status. CORE training needs to be completed by a minimum of two persons per county or municipality: (1) local municipal employee of elected official and (2) a commissions member, board member, volunteer, or elected official. Designed to familiarize individuals with the background of Community Forestry and Shade Tree Commission, the legal aspects of managing trees, and the recognition of hazardous tree situations. CORE trainings

		are held biannually (Spring & Fall) and *do not* count towards CEU credit.
E	Ecosystem Services	The combined resources and process of ecosystems that provide benefits to humans, including, but not limited to, food production, nutrient and water cycling, temperature regulation, spiritual and recreational benefits, aesthetic value, and biodiversity support.
	Elements	Components of your urban and community forest that you would like to manage in this 5-year plan cycle.
G	Goals	Overarching Goals that comprise a future vision of your community, program, and its trees. Also known as Overall Program Goals.
	Green Communities Grant	Funding assistance to create a community's *first* management plan ($3,000 + 100% match to hire a professional to develop a local stewardship plan).
L	Liability Statement	An explanation of how liability has been addressed and/or will be reduced via loss reduction and protection resulting from the development of the Community Forest Management Plan. *This statement will provide the link between the Plan and the Legislation* (i.e., The New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act).
M	Mission Statement	A short statement that defines the purpose for creating the Management Plan.
N	New Jersey Community Forestry Council	Established by the New Jersey Shade Tree & Community Forestry Assistance Act in 1996, the Council provides advice, assistance, and recommendations to the State Forester, NJ Urban & Community Forestry, and the DEP in promoting, supporting, and advancing healthy, safe and sustainable urban and community forests in New Jersey.
	New Jersey Shade Tree & Community Forestry Assistance Act	Legislation approved December 5, 1996, establishing the 'New Jersey Shade Tree & Community Forestry Program' and providing guidelines under which the Program should operate. The Act also (1) established the Community Forestry Council to review Community Forest Management plans and work with the New Jersey Forest Service, (2) created the 'Shade Tree and Community Forest Preservation License Plate Fund', and (3) removes liability from community Shade Tree Commissions for death and/or injury.
O	Objectives	Milestones set to help you reach your Overall Program Goals under the frame of each Element.

S	Shade Tree Commission	A municipal body created to oversee and manage urban community forestry actions and activities, as mentioned in the New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act. Does not have to operate under this name, but rather can take many different forms depending on the context and municipality.
	Stewardship Grant	Assist in the implementation of a UCF management plan. Also required to submit a 'Reforestation, Tree Planting, and Maintenance Plan'.
U	Urban Forest	The trees within an urban area, such as yards, along streets, utility/transportation corridors and natural areas.
#	10-20-30 Rule	The concept which states that any given urban forest (municipality, for example) should comprise no more than 10% of any single species, 20% of any single genus and 30% of any single family.