

Tree planning project gains support

By John Ortmann

The one-year-old UNL Department of Forestries and wildlife program is gaining acceptance as a university and community service, according to a southeast district state forester.

Dennis Adams said the purpose of the program is to provide communities with tree management planning and technical services.

Thirty communities are currently participating in the program and at least 30 more have expressed an interest in the project, Adams said.

Adams said benefits of community forest management became apparent in many cities after Dutch elm disease left communities almost without trees.

In 1972, Congress authorized the U.S. Forest Service to aid state foresters in developing a community assistance program, Adams said.

Nebraska started its program without federal funding, but began receiving forest service funds one year ago, to provide services free of cost to communities, he said.

When the program began all communities in the state received a letter alerting them to the program, Adams

said.

Communities are required to create a tree or forest board within the city government. State foresters then conduct a community tree inventory to determine size, number and species of trees, Adams said.

Using the inventory, the community tree board and the state foresters develop a master plan for tree planting on city-owned property. A typical plan includes budgeting money to implement the plan, establishing guidelines for future planting and passing city ordinances to authorize the work.

The department does not provide labor or materials during the planting stage. Only advice and expertise is offered during the planning stage, Adams said.

To date, Auburn is the only community to complete a master plan, but more are expected in the near future, he said.

The department is in the process of hiring a full-time community forester to manage the program after Jan. 1.

Interested communities can learn full details of the program by contacting the department or the local county extension agent.



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