

NAS Workshop Debrief
Monday, October 28, 2013
APA DC Offices

Attendance: 30+

Presenters: Laurie Gellar, Beth Larry, Gary Allen, Mike Galvin

- Laurie Gellar provided a first-person summary of the WS and the report (see report conclusion, page 40). Excerpts from the summary:

"...opportunity to reflect on the state of the science regarding the role of trees in urban ecosystems, and that it identified knowledge gaps and challenges in translating science into practice...At the same time however, participants signaled that there is a larger research community that can contribute to this conversation in order to fully understand the potential synergies and tradeoffs of services and disservices provided by trees in the urban ecosystem. Current researcher have made significant progress in studying how trees can mitigate some of the detrimental impacts of urbanization through a variety of ecosystem services. However, a number of workshop participants noted that scientific understanding of key mechanisms governing ecosystem functions across multiple scales is incomplete, and most benefits of urban trees require further investigation. In many cases, the existing base of studies is too limited to allow one to make generalizations...Overall, the workshop discussions indicated that to advance the study of urban trees and their role in providing ecosystem services, it is necessary to continue to raise new questions and to develop new paradigms and new tools that can fully address the complexity of urban ecosystems as human habitats."

- Largely, the field appears to be moving from the qualitative to the quantitative and there has been "great progress of studying the science and data. But now we need to better identify the gaps."
- We recognize we are barely scratching the surface of the issues and questions. There are two approaches:
 1. Big systems approach of which UF is one component
 2. A more narrow approach/look at UF systems
- The WS provided a fantastic value as the FIRST STEP and to encourage the federal government to continue and expand its investment in science and research around these issues.
- One of the challenges is making the right connections between agencies and using the same language between agencies and sectors. "It is a game that we need to keep playing."
- Because the USDA FS was always leading and pioneering concepts around ecosystem services, it was important to host this WS and get an updated "state of the sciences".
- iTree helps "us" get in the door but research needs to continue re: other tools.
- The report validates (via a non-biased independent study) the message that more research is necessary to grow our work, expand the number of scientists and overall funding.
- The WS was a great opportunity for a large data dump and in an age of non-vetted information, this report provides vetted, contextualized information.

- If the FS Chief and Dept of Ag are quoting and talking UF, the Hill should ALSO know this.
- Three basic audiences emerged from the conversation:
 - Federal agencies
 - Media/communication community
 - Local
- Observation: Lack of clearing house on ecosystems data – gap of public health studies
- Every year local gov'ts are reviewing their capital improvement budgets and general operating budgets – these are opportunities to help influence decisions

POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

- Contextualize and leverage this information with policymakers – both local leaders and federal reps
- Cross-walk this report with multiple other agencies including DOI, EPA+; Convene the “federal family” such as through the Urban Waters Initiative which has a ready-made forum
- Explore workshops with municipalities, esp., those with catastrophic events such as floods, storms, EAB; there is a good deal of misinformation getting out and it is imp. To get the right information to the decision makers and implementers.
- Learn more about NSF Urban Sustainability Research Grant – mentioned by Lisa P @ DOI.
- How does SUFC help address and move these issues and opportunities forward?