

SUFC Research Committee

Monday, May 6, 2013

Participating: Melinda Householder & Peter Hutchins/American Forests; Ann Gosline/Clean Air Task Force; Faith Campbell/TNC; Scott Maco/Davey; Michael Leff/FS & Davey; Gerry Gray; Olivia Starr/APA; Rich Dolesh/Nat'l Rec & Parks Assoc.

The goal of today's call was for workgroup members to review the current draft of 10 Urban Forestry research areas and make notes re: SUFC prioritization. (See list embedded in final page of this document.)

Ecosystem Services

- There was some discussion about item #1, Ecosystem services (ES), which in many ways could function as the overarching umbrella for all other items.
- Point made that calculating ES values is extremely important for various reasons and constituencies.
 - Olivia: APA would use that data to influence development decisions on a site level.
 - Scott: There is a need for refinement of model calculations on a site level as well as national basis.
 - Faith: Should focus be on refining ES calculations that are already part way there, or trying to develop potential new ES areas for valuation?
- Rich: Nothing makes eyes glaze over like “ecosystems services” terminology. Not appropriate for policy or advocacy.
 - Olivia: We could still use ES to define what we're after – though we know not to use it for outreach.
 - Scott: Good point. This is for us, so we can use it for influencing budget and agenda. Perhaps we should use ES as overall umbrella, but be more specific about individual items that fall within that framework.

Human Health

- Ann: Clean Air Task Force would be most interested in elements of human health related to air quality, heat island, and multiple ways that urban forests affect those parameters. There's a huge amount of work to be done there – especially if looking to have UF efforts recognized as mitigation in regulatory areas.
- Peter: Much more progress needed in human health arena. Biggest benefits will be to pull in this new ES area, which is hard to convey to the public now.
- Ann: Quantifying all of these ES is critically important, and maybe we can reach consensus that this is an area that deserves time and energy.
- General agreement that human health is a high-priority area of key concern.

Other items

- Noted that “Forests products” has become a key urban forestry concern, with new attention to wood utilization due especially to losses from pest damage.
- Rich: We should add “Social science” component to the list. (See recent Washington Post articles on community attitudes toward tree planting programs.)
 - Scott: You’re right, that should be spelled out.
- Peter/Melinda: Top 3 priorities for American Forests: (1) Ecosystem services, (2) Human health, (3) Inventorying urban tree canopies.

Overall

- Scott: We can use this research priority list in multiple ways, with various constituencies. First, we want to make sure key items are captured. We can ask – What is most important? What is low-hanging fruit?
- Still have work to do on clarifying and prioritizing these elements. Human health seems to be at top of list – as is refining models that allow better ES calculation in order to align with regulations. Every item has its place and we need to find room for them.
- We all need to take another look.

Next steps

- Scott will take a stab at revising placement and description of “Ecosystem services” in the framework. If anyone else can help to better define each of these items from your organization’s position, that would be helpful.
- Scott and Michael will create a Survey Monkey poll to circulate among workgroup so all can indicate rank-order priorities for the 10 items, and provide other feedback as well.
- Our near-term goal is to sort all this out in time to utilize during discussions in late May/early June with Michael Rains (USFS Northern Research Station) and others developing national research agenda.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Rich shares links to recent Washington Post articles.
2. Scott/Michael create and circulate to workgroup a Survey Monkey poll to rank-order research priorities.
3. Workgroup members respond to survey and also provide further input on each research priority from their own organizations’ perspective.
4. **Next meeting: Monday, May 13, at 12:00 Eastern** – with possible weekly meeting at same time for remainder of this month.

(Notes submitted by Michael Leff)



1. Ecosystem services

- a. Health of an ecosystem and the benefits it provides
- b. Environmental Economics

2. Human health

- a. Ranging from asthma and skin cancer rates to monitored stress levels - loss of productivity (school, work)

3. Community health

- a. Economic well-being (business vitality, jobs etc.)

4. Threats

- a. Pest, climate adaption/change

5. Optimizing urban tree plantings (metric and tree canopy goals – how to maximize urban forest benefits)

- a. Green infrastructure
- b. Forecasting

6. Inventorying urban tree canopies

- a. Monitoring
- b. GIS/mapping, FIA+
- c. Doing more and doing it better - both at landscape and individual parcel level

7. Science delivery

- a. Tech transfer and making it accessible

8. Forest products

- a. Protocols for wood utilization

9. Ecosystem Services Markets & Banking

10. Standards

- a. Tied to Vibrant Cities Standards initiative (Rec. #12) & existing sustainability standards (STAR, Envision+)
 - i. Elements of sustainability - what it means to be a sustainable community (resource base, knowledge, management now and into the future)