Does your community have an arboretum?
See page 4.

Coordinator's Column

Tree Risk Management—Part 2

Tree Risk Assessment and Management

Note: The following information is from 'An Introduction to Tree Risk Assessment for Municipal Officials' webinar by Association of Idaho Cities' attorney Jerry Mason and Oregon Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager Paul Ries. It was sponsored by the states of Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture. The presentation in PDF format and the audio (MP3) are available for download at: http://www.idl.idaho.gov/bureau/community_forestry/home/index.htm.

In the last issue of this newsletter, I wrote about the liability communities may face with respect to losses within public rights-of-way caused by trees. The best way to reduce both risk and liability is to have a program of continuous assessment and management. This article provides the basics for doing this along with valuable sources of additional information that I encourage you to read.

Tree risk assessment is the systematic process of identifying, analyzing and evaluating tree risk. Tree risk management is the application of policies, procedures and practices to identify, evaluate, mitigate, monitor and communicate tree risk at a broader scale. The goal is to reduce risks to public safety and demonstrate reasonable care on the part of the city.

Our world is not free of risks, nor is any tree, though the risk to human safety from trees is extremely low. We accept some level of risk in order to experience the benefits trees provide. Tree risk assessment is a method of quantifying this risk in order to focus attention on those trees where the potential risk exceeds what we are willing to accept. A tree risk assessment evaluates the structural condition of a tree to determine the likelihood of failure and the consequences that may result if this happens. Together, these factors help us estimate and identify the level of risk and what actions, if any, should be taken.

Assessments, therefore, need to look at the tree and potential targets (e.g. people and property). What is the likelihood of a tree—or part of a tree—failing? If it does fail, what

The cost of regular assessment and management of trees for risk rarely, if ever, exceeds the costs of liability.

Steve Churchillo, City of Reno

is/are the potential target(s) it may impact? Last, what are the potential consequences? Consider a small tree in a park that is structurally unsound. Even though the risk of failure is very likely and targets exist, the consequences involved may be relatively minor due to the tree's small size. A larger tree at moderate risk of failure, but which is leaning over playground equipment, will have far greater consequences and, therefore, be a higher priority to address.

There are three different levels of assessments and which is most appropriate will depend on the situation. At the very least, a city should conduct a Limited Visual (Level 1) Assessment. This is the fastest though least thorough of the three levels, and is typically accomplished by walking or driving by trees and noting any issues that are visible. It's quick and useful for identifying more obvious hazards. Basic (Level 2), and Advanced (Level 3) Assessments look in progressively more detail at the tree and surrounding site. See the link on page 2 to an article that explains these three levels in more detail.

Once an assessment is complete, the city should begin to address the risks on a priority basis and document these actions. This will demonstrate that a community is working systematically to address risks, with those that are most urgent mitigated first.

Also important is a written, legally approved policy that spells out program goals, management strategies and implementation steps. The policy must be defensible and, most important, followed. The publication *Urban Tree Risk Management: A Community Guide to Program Design and Implementation* provides an excellent framework to develop a good community tree risk management program.

A community cannot save every tree nor should it cut every one down. However, it also cannot ignore potential risks. Indeed, the cost of prevention rarely exceeds the cost of repair or damages. Developing a systematic process for tree risk assessment and mitigation will increase public safety, improve overall urban forest health and reduce a community's liability by demonstrating a reasonable standard of care.

Tree Risk Assessment and Management Resources

It's impossible to provide all the information needed to assess or manage tree risk in communities in a short article. The resources below provide excellent information that expands on the topics mentioned above and, with the exception of the last one, are available for free download at the links provided. The first three are part of a series on tree risk assessment from *Arborist News Magazine*, a publication of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). The fourth is an excellent guide for developing or improving community tree risk management programs. The last is *Best Management Practices for Tree Risk Assessment*—a companion document of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI A300 part 9) for assessing tree risk.

Tree Risk Assessment: A Foundation
http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/640233a3#/640233a3/14
The basics of tree risk assessment.

Qualitative Tree Risk Assessment
http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/6e46d228#/6e46d228/14
This categorizes both risk and the consequences of failure to develop a tree risk rating system, including how to determine an acceptable level of risk.

Tree Risk Assessment: Levels of Risk
http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/6e46d228#/6e46d228/14
A description of the three levels of risk assessment, what is involved and their uses.

Urban Tree Risk Management: A Community Guide to Program Design and Implementation
http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/uf/utrmm
A comprehensive guide for communities to develop or improve a tree risk management program.

Best Management Practices (BMP) – Tree Risk Assessment
http://www.isa-arbor.com/store/product.aspx?ProductID=324
(Cost is $15 for International Society of Arboriculture members, $20 for non-members)

– David Stephenson
Community Forestry Coordinator

Idaho Community Forestry Partners Makes Progress

As reported in the Spring, 2011 newsletter, Idaho Community Forestry Partners (ICFP) is a consortium of southern Idaho communities that pools resources to provide education about tree planting and care to city employees and residents. ICFP has now created a website that offers information on tree ordinance development or updates, Tree City USA, an event calendar, arboricultural links, contact information, and educational articles ranging in topics from community forestry issues to proper tree care and more. The website address is: www.IDCFP.org.

ICFP was inspired by a program in northern Idaho and eastern Washington called Community Canopy. A project that Community Canopy undertook involved the use of flip charts that allowed educators to offer "tail-gate" education sessions targeting small audiences such as landscape workers on various tree related issues. ICFP has now implemented this same outreach activity using materials supplied by Community Canopy as well as some developed by the organizational committee of ICFP. The flip charts have been used at Arbor Day celebrations, spring fairs, and at tree committee meetings. Plans are underway to present at other private and public events where attendees are responsible for the maintenance of the trees on their property. It is felt that by providing good examples

Under gray skies, Ammon Parks & Recreation Director Ken Knoch represents Idaho Community Forestry Partners at the Pocatello Spring Fair.

Photo by Gerry Bates

of arboriculture practices in high visibility areas, the public will become better educated in proper tree selection, planting and maintenance, pruning and insect and disease control.

If your city, company or organization has an event where tree education can be on the agenda, ICFP can either loan the flip charts or an ICFP member may be able to attend and present topics that will be useful. For additional information, please contact Gerry Bates, Southern Idaho Community Forestry Assistant at 208-681-5964 or plantingidaho@gmail.com.

Idaho's Environmental Education Organization

Do you know about Project WILD? Or Project Learning Tree, or Project WET? How about sustainable forestry tours for teachers and guidance counselors? Or the availability of Forest Education Grants? These are just some of the things of interest to members of Idaho Environmental Education Association and its host of sponsors in the natural resource management fields. For more information about this organization, its annual conference and other programs, visit: www.idahoee.org.

Recommendation: Stop Use of Russian Olive

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has issued a bulletin urging that the use of Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) in Idaho be discontinued. This small tree was once widely recommended for windbreaks, shelterbelts, erosion control and wildlife habitat. It has also been used in urban home and park landscapes. The tree's attributes include its tolerance of dry, semi-arid and saline conditions. Unfortunately, it has become an invasive species especially along roadsides and in wetlands and riparian areas in lower elevations. As an invasive, it crowds out more beneficial native species and disrupts ecological balance. Researchers describe sites along the Snake River where this species now makes up 66 – 80 percent of the canopy cover.

Although not currently on the Federal Noxious Weed list, it has been declared legally noxious in New Mexico, Colorado and several Utah counties. The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service and several other organizations list Russian olive as invasive.

Urban Forestry Emergency Response Guide Now Available

Smart Trees Pacific has released a new online publication to help city officials think strategically about the role of emergency response as part of their urban forest management. The project was driven by a growing recognition of the devastation that can happen to the urban forest after a natural disaster such as an ice storm or wind event. The user-friendly guide provides urban forestry professionals or others who are responsible for municipal trees with specific approaches that can be used in emergency planning and preparation. Visit www.smarttreespacific.org/?s=urban+forestry+emergency+operations+guide to see and begin using this helpful new resource.

Summer/Fall 2013 Events Calendar

September 18 – 20

2013 Northern Rockies Tree School – "Risky Business," Dillon, MT. This conference will include topics on Tree Planting and Establishment, Selecting Trees to Avoid Conflict, Pruning to Minimize Risk and Using Dogs to Detect Emerald Ash Borers. Visit http://www.dillontrees.org for more information.

September 22 – 25

Pacific NW Chapter, International Society of Arboriculture Annual Conference, Surry, British Columbia. Visit pnwisa.org for more information.

October 9 – 11

Idaho Chapter, American Planning Association Annual Conference, Idaho Falls. For more information, visit the conference website at http://idahoapa.org/2012-annual-conference-2.

November 5

Society of Municipal Arborists Annual Conference, Pittsburgh, PA. Visit the Society of Municipal Arborists website at http://www.urban-forestry.com for more information.

November 6 – 7

Partners in Community Forestry Conference, Pittsburgh, PA. Visit Arbor Day Foundation's Conference website at http://www.arborday.org/shopping/pcf/2013 for more information and to register.

Note: The above two conferences have been strategically planned to make attendance at both more convenient and economical. Both also offer excellent training opportunities for new or experienced employees and tree board members. Continuing education credits for ISA certification will be available.

Upcoming Exams

Upcoming Certified Arborist (CA), Certified Tree Worker (CTW), Municipal Specialist (MS) and Utility Specialist (UA) written Exams

September 19, 2013	Dillon, MT (CA, UA, MS)[1]
September 21, 2013	Pocatello, ID (CA, UA, MS, CTW/Aerial Lift Specialist written exam)[2]

[1]*For information or to register, contact International Society of Arboriculture at (217) 355-9411 or e-mail cert@isa-arbor.com*

[2]*For information or to register, contact Pacific Northwest Chapter, International Society of Arboriculture at 503/874-8263 or 217-355-9411 or email: info@pnwisa.org.*

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Tree tip

Start Your Own Arboretum

Arboreta are like local museums – every community should have one. An arboretum need not be large and professionally-managed like the University of Idaho's 63-acre site or its older 14-acre Shattuck Arboretum – one of the oldest in the West. While dedicated space is ideal, trees can also be marked and information provided in small parks, power line rights-of-way, cemeteries, or around municipal buildings and along bike paths.

Arboreta benefit the community in a number of ways:

- Inform residents about what will thrive locally.
- Show the form and seasonal color of trees before they are selected for planting.
- Teach about trees and tree care to all ages.
- Provide an attraction to tourists and other visitors.
- Serve as a place for meditation or passive recreation.

More about planning an arboretum can be found in Tree City USA Bulletin No. 65. This and 67 other helpful issues are available at: arborday.org/ programs/treecityUSA/bulletins/archive.cfm