

# THE URBAN FORESTRY WORKING GROUP OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS<sup>1</sup>

by J. James Kielbaso

**Abstract.** The objective of the Society of American Foresters is followed by a discussion of the role of the Forest Science Board, Subject Areas, and Working Groups. The Urban Forestry Working Group is presented in this context. A history of the UFWG is given, along with current goals of the group which include a tour and technical session to be held in conjunction with the SAF annual meeting. The roles of the UFWG and ISA are similar and professional contacts between the two is encouraged and regional technical workshops should be considered for co-sponsorship.

My assignment is to provide a report on the Urban Forestry Working Group (UFWG) of the Society of American Foresters, of which I am currently chairman.

First, an understanding of what SAF stands for is in order. From the constitution, the objective of the SAF *shall be to advance the science, technology, education, and practice of professional forestry in America and to use the knowledge and skill of the profession to benefit society.*

There are six member grades including Members, Technician Members and Student Members. From the Constitution Article III, section 4; *Members shall be (1) graduates of curricula approved by the Council in institutions either accredited or affiliated by the Council, or (2) scientists or practitioners in fields closely allied to forestry who hold a bachelor or higher degree in their special field and who are rendering or have rendered substantial service to forestry.* As of May, 1977, there were 21,829 SAF members.

Within the SAF are a Forest Science Board, Subject Areas, and Working Groups. Their total purpose is to provide within the Society an effective means for the development, dissemination and use of forest sciences. There are then established seven groupings of forestry disciplines, each further divided into working groups which are communities of interest. Working groups have flexibility to determine and carry out appropriate projects. Currently there are 27 working groups within the seven subject

areas. Within the broad subject area of Social and Related Arts and Sciences is found the Urban Forestry working group.

Within the Society members may choose to be considered on up to three working groups. My last report indicates that 692 SAF members have selected the UFWG as one of their three allowed choices. One-third of these have indicated Urban Forestry as their first choice. There appears to be considerable peripheral interest in our group. The 692 members ranks the UFWG as 11th of the 27 groups.

Professional foresters have been working in cities for many years. Alfred K. Chittenden taught an urban forestry course at Michigan State as early as 1914. In 1937, MSU added a program in municipal forestry which was subsequently headed by Karl Dressel.

I have a sense of pride in following Karl Dressel in my position. Many of you knew him or knew of him and his name is listed as a 3-term president of the NSTC in 1938-40. Many urban, community or city foresters owe their start to Karl, and other foresters like him, teaching urban concepts at other forestry schools.

I understand that Filbert Roth also taught a similar offering at the University of Michigan at an early date. Faculty from the State University of New York (SUNY) were involved in urban activities in the 1914-1920 era.

Although the profession of forestry has not always championed urban forestry, there has been forestry input into urban areas over a long period in this country. Nor has the SAF always championed urban forestry. I would guess, without data, that more than 1/2 of the eligible SAF members currently working in urban forestry are not SAF members because the Society has had nothing to offer them. The number may be substantially higher than 50 percent, too.

The UFWG held its first meeting on October 5,

<sup>1</sup>Presented at the ISA Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in August 1977.

1972 at the SAF national convention in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Approximately 20 members attended this meeting at which a definition of Urban Forestry, for SAF purposes, was sought and the purpose and role of the working group was discussed.

The definition of Urban Forestry finally accepted will be given later, but first a few notes from that meeting are of interest here.

- 1) The group can provide a *professional* affiliation for urban foresters, many of whom do not now belong to SAF because it does not meet their needs.
- 2) The group should establish contact with ISTC (ISA) and other groups that may include urban foresters.
- 3) We should strive to complement, not compete with these other groups.

Several other points were considered but are not as specific to our purpose here.

John Mixon a metro forester with the state of Georgia was the first elected chairman following interim chairman Brian Payne. Mixon called a meeting during the ISTC Annual Meeting in Atlanta on August 20, 1974. At that meeting a definition was approved and the UFWG objectives agreed upon.

I have heard it said that the camel must have been developed by a committee. When it came to trying to gain a consensus of a definition of urban forestry, we came to some difficult conclusions and compromises. I would much rather formulate my own personal definition than to be part of a group with many people who must be satisfied with the results. Nevertheless, we came up with a good, generally acceptable, definition as follows: "Urban forestry is a branch of forestry that has as its objective the cultivation and management of trees for their contribution to the physiological, sociological and economic well-being of urban society."

I should add that this definition was arrived at by SAF members and therefore does not purport to restrict anyone else from a narrower or broader definition of the field, although we would like to think it is one that almost all urban foresters can accept.

At the same Atlanta meeting a list of *objectives*

for the UFWG was agreed upon as follows:

- a) Establish liaison with such associations as the International Shade Tree Conference and Society of Municipal Arborists 1) to exchange information on purposes and objectives of our respective organizations, 2) to avoid duplication of effort in setting up training meetings and/or conferences or other educational projects where interests and purposes are common to our respective organizations, and 3) to exchange results of research and field testing.
- b) Represent the interests and needs of urban-oriented foresters as a means of holding their interest in the Society of American Foresters.
- c) Serve as the advisory branch of the Society in the field of urban forestry.
- d) Determine educational needs and career opportunities in urban forestry.
- e) Encourage educational institutions to develop a curriculum in urban forestry or to improve existing courses.
- f) Communicate with public and private planning agencies to encourage their employment of professional foresters.
- g) Coordinate programs and plans with other appropriate Society Working Groups.
- h) Serve as consultants to Sections when assistance is needed to set up regional technical conferences.
- i) Identify areas of needed research in urban forestry.

Several *projects* were also identified:

1. Prepare a directory (listing by states), giving names of professional foresters (public or private) working in the field of urban forestry. This has been completed once, but is now badly in need of revision and refinement.
2. Prepare a compendium of state laws and municipal codes on urban/community forestry.
3. Prepare a bibliography on major publications covering the urban field. Completed by John Andresen. Now out of print.
4. Collect and distribute job descriptions and salary schedules currently in use for urban forestry positions.
5. Prepare a policy statement for the Society on the importance of urban forestry. Include a definition of urban forestry in the statement.

SAF regional sections may also function through the UFWG. As an example the southeastern section developed a city tree ordinance for southeastern cities which provided options for individual circumstances. This has been distributed by that section.

Since there was continuing confusion as to what urban forestry is and what urban foresters do, second chairman, Gene W. Grey of Kansas State University addressed a letter to the editor of the Journal of Arboriculture, Dan Neely on June 23, 1975. It was subsequently printed in

the journal of August 1975, Vol. 1, No. 8, and hopefully alleviated much confusion surrounding "urban forestry" and the SAF urban forestry working group.

Subsequent meetings of the UFWG have wrestled with project proposals and revision of working group goals. The current general goals for 1977 as reported in June 1977, in the Journal of Forestry are:

1. Attempt to have papers and programs on urban forestry presented at the national convention in Albuquerque.
2. Arrange an urban forestry tour in conjunction with the national convention in Albuquerque.
3. Work on revision of the Directory of Urban Forestry.
4. Increase communication within the working group by means of meetings and periodic newsletters.
5. Submit papers on urban forestry to the Journal of Forestry and other appropriate publications.
6. Explore the possibilities of co-sponsorship of regional technical workshops.
7. Continue collecting city ordinances and laws relating to urban forestry.
8. Consider the feasibility of updating and reprinting a bibliography of urban forestry publications.

Of these the first two will be accomplished at the SAF convention, October 2-5, in Albuquerque, NM. A tour will be conducted on Tuesday afternoon, October 4, to observe Albuquerque area urban forestry. After the convention, and beginning the evening of October 5, the UFWG is sponsoring a technical post-convention technical session to include discussions of urban tree inventory methodology, pathology of oak, recent legislative action affecting urban forestry, planting survival, and review of a waste wood/energy conference, to mention a few. More articles of an urban forestry nature have been printed in the Journal of Forestry and revision of the Directory of Urban Foresters is planned in the near future.

The working group concept has not been an easy one to work with. I was on the first nominating committee and have been affiliated as an officer or on the executive board since its start in 1972. Since the start I have had reservations as to the specific role of UFWG, especially as related to ISA and others.

The strength we have is that of professionally trained foresters, all with the same urban interest, though perhaps from several directions such as private, city, state, etc. Unfortunately, we have not long had a respectable place within the profession or SAF, so many of our potentially valuable members are not currently affiliated. We have had to struggle with this and still have a long way to go.

The profession is now recognizing its role in urban areas and this should enhance our professional affiliation. The desire not to compete, nor unduly overlap, with other groups has left us in a rather difficult position. Hopefully meetings such as this and our upcoming meeting in Albuquerque will help to provide us with more specific, tangible and attainable goals. I heartily propose that the UFWG maintain professional contact with ISA at sessions similar to this. It should work to the benefit of both groups to have an exchange of ideas relative to trees in urban settings. I would encourage some ISA attendance at the SAF UFWG technical session in Albuquerque and we should consider co-sponsorship of some regional technical workshops of mutual concern.

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