

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY AS THE AMERICAN FORESTRY ASSOCIATION SEES IT¹

by Henry W. De Bruin

First, I want to thank you for asking the American Forestry Association to share in this great meeting. It is a personal pleasure for me to be here with you. The International Society of Arboriculture is certainly growing in stature, professionalism, and effective partnerships.

Second, let's talk about urban and community forestry and the American Forestry Association. Someone asked me last week, "What is the future of urban and community forestry in the American Forestry Association?" That is a good question. A part of the answer is being written at this meeting. Can AFA form trust relationships and working partnerships with all others who care about trees for effective joint actions?

Now for a quick look at the American Forestry Association, urban forestry and the people we serve. AFA has served its members and America since 1875. It is a citizens conservation organization, dedicated to the belief in stewardship of the land and natural resources, with a special focus on the trees. As most of you know, urban forestry is not new. What is new is that America has become a nation with an urban value system, is media dominated, and technology oriented. This is neither good nor bad in itself. If we sincerely want to meet the challenges of the 80's, we can say, "The American Forestry Association seeks a working partnership with the arborists, the nurserymen, the landscape industry, and others, to work together to build a better America." There is so much work to be done, that if we all focus on "areas of mutual agreement" we will find, I believe, challenges equal to our abilities and combined expertise. Working together we can meet the challenges. Said another way: "The American Forestry Association believes all people who care about trees should work together on mutual goals." Those of you who are AFA members know that the American Forestry Association has made a great commitment to urban and community

forestry. One question we might ask is, why? There are two important reasons: 1) there appeared to be a void in forestry leadership in urban forestry, and 2) surveys of our members showed more and more of them were living in the city. Urban concerns and urban values dominated the thinking and management wishes of many of our members who own forest land.

At this point we could spend a long time discussing things like subdividing the American landscape, planning and zoning, loss of frontiers, conflicts of land use, taxes, economics of forest land management, preserving the forest land base, national renewable resource priorities, the desire for clean air, clean water, and improving the quality of living in our cities where most of us now live, work, and recreate. All of these items are a part of the agenda that is shaping a new perspective about caring for trees, natural resources management, and stewardship of the land. "The American Forestry Association believes that by working together we can improve the quality of living and enjoyment in our cities and communities."

Now the commitment has been made and the goal set to help form working partnerships with all who "care about trees". What can the American Forestry Association uniquely contribute to this partnership? I believe there are three areas where the AFA can help. They are: communications, helping determine common goals (areas of agreement), and national legislation.

Let me briefly discuss these three items. As most of you know, AFA publishes books relating to trees and forestry. In addition, we publish a monthly magazine, highly prized by members, entitled *American Forests*. We also publish the Urban and Community Forestry Newsletter, bi-monthly, called the *Forum*. All of these publications offer new audiences to ISA, its officers and members. The *Forum* goes to over 5,000 urban and community forestry leaders. American

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Forests touches the lives of thousands who "care about trees." One reason I'm so pleased to be here is to meet the new officers and to get an update on ISA and related group activities so that information in AFA publications can be current and accurate. I know I'm pleased to be an active member of ISA! In addition to these items we are working to perfect a system of computer communications which will allow us to tie together the existing networks in a "hot line" information service.

The American Forestry Association has been bringing groups of leaders to form "areas of agreement" action programs for many years. These efforts almost always result in plans of action which form a basis for effective collective action. This is one important objective of the 2nd National Urban Forestry Conference. It may sometimes be easier for any one of us to "go it alone" but it is my personal observation it is not the best or most effective way.

AFA has since its inception been an effective advocate of enlightened legislation in natural resources management and related issues. In addition, AFA has sought to keep trees, forestry, and related natural resources on the nation's agenda. We can say "The American Forestry Association has been caring about trees and related resources since 1875." And finally, I'd like to share what AFA working in partnership with a team of others has started and what, with your help and support, this team of partners hopes to do.

What has been done by the team: established a National Urban and Community Forestry Leaders Council, (UCFLC) publishes a UCFLC bimonthly newsletter called the *FORUM*, planned the 2nd

National Urban Forestry Conference (Cincinnati, Ohio, October 1982), started a UCFLC youth conservation program with the introduction of *Spunky*, the urban forestry squirrel, and prepared two public service announcements to be aired in September 1982.

Now for a few of the items the group feels need to be done (you can list several more I'm sure), improve our national communications so we can be current in getting existing information to those that need it quickly, strengthen our ability to work together by getting to know each other better, keep our message and issues before the public, and develop effective mutual action support groups to push our "areas of agreement" priorities. This is enough for starters.

In conclusion, the AFA seeks your personal involvement, advice, and counsel. AFA takes seriously the great challenge God has given us — the stewardship of our land and related resources. In many countries where I have worked where resources have been abused, society pays a tremendous price. These include Iran, parts of North America, parts of Costa Rica, and parts of Mexico.

AFA believes proper responsible management of all of our natural resources is an important element in a strong and healthy society and a necessary ingredient for a country of beauty and abundance. We have much work to do. Let's find ways to work together to get it done.

*Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator
American Forestry Association
1319 18th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036*