

## **New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act 2008 Annual Accomplishment Report for Bernards Township**

### **Community Forestry Program Administration:**

Our Shade Tree Commission (STC) consists of seven volunteer positions. One Commissioner resigned in June, but quickly replaced with another volunteer. This past year we received approval from the Bernards Township Committee to expand the Commission to include two alternates. The two alternate positions were filled in December of 2008.

Currently, the STC and the Department of Public Works (DPW) maintains the responsibility for tree resources in Bernards Township.

### **Training and Professional Development**

Two ST Commissioners attended the CORE Training seminar at the N.J. Shade Tree Federation's Annual Meeting in Cherry Hill. One Commissioner obtained five CEU's by attending various sessions during the meeting. Another Commissioner obtained two CEU's at the same meeting. Four DPW staff members attended a Rutgers Pesticide Training class and received four CEU's each for that class. A total of 23 credits obtained.

### **Public Education/Awareness/Outreach:**

The STC was engaged in four awareness programs in 2008. The Town's annual Charter Day this May gave us the opportunity to market the STC through an awareness booth. We were able to distribute seedlings, walking tour maps of 20 tree species in Town and informational flyers. We also conducted a how-to clinic on proper tree mulching techniques. Names of residents and street locations of potential tree hazards and replanting requests were also obtained.

The annual Arbor Day ceremony was conducted by the ST Commissioners. The site selected was at the Town Dog Park and five trees were planted. Information on the ceremony was submitted and printed in a local newspaper.

The STC coordinated the distribution of over 50 seedlings and tree informational handouts to elementary school children in Town.

The STC also participated in a new township sponsored environmental awareness "Grateful Green Expo" this autumn. We set up a display table, met residents and handed out informational flyers.

### **Statement of Tree Budget:**

The 2008 Budget was set at \$39,500, which is consistent with prior year. In-kind services are estimated at \$15,200. No significant changes or problems are anticipated in the budget this year.

### **Plan Implementation:**

The renewal of the Community Forestry Management Plan for 2008-2012 was completed, submitted and approved this year.

The STC continued identifying tree hazards throughout the community. Working hand-in-hand with DPW and Somerset County, several trees hazards were removed.

A sub-committee was created to review existing tree ordinances in Town. The sub-committee will work on developing more comprehensive ordinances. We are awaiting the outcome of the Jackson Township case currently being heard by the State Supreme Court before further work is prepared.

The STC presented a proposal to the Town Planning Board Commission, to adopt the Bernards Township Community Forestry Management Plan within the five-year Town Master Plan. The proposal was accepted and input from the STC was welcomed.

Windshield surveys by STC volunteers and DPW staff continued in 2008. Tree hazards and new tree planting locations were identified.

The STC contacted the local utility company to assist in re-planting around two sub-stations in Town. One sub-station was upgraded with new plantings.

An outline of a tree inventory tracking system has been discussed. The beginnings of the inventory will be the past four years tree plantings as well as the Walking Tour trees.

Communications between STC, DPW and Somerset County tree crews improved in 2008. Improved methods of tree hazard notifications via email and joint meetings assisted in this area. The STC webpage on the Township's website continues to be enhanced for better communication with residents.

A total of 56 replacement trees were established by the STC this year. The planting was conducted by an outside contractor who was also selected by the STC.

Bernards Township was also approved for Tree City USA certification for 2008. The renewal application for 2009 has been submitted.

### Community Stewardship Incentive Program

A Green Communities Challenge Grant was awarded in 2007 for \$3,000 to assist with the writing of the Community Forestry Plan, which expired in 2007. The \$3,000 grant money from the State was received in December of 2008.