

SUCCESS STORY

"Southwest Alabama Urban Forester Program"

Ala-Tom RC&D Council

Project Statement: To provide technical assistance to cities and towns in Southwest Alabama. The purpose is to help communities create and maintain a safe, healthy, and attractive urban forest by promoting awareness and education of proper urban forestry management practices. The program targets elected officials, municipal employees, and citizens of Southwest Alabama.

Location: Operating out of Grove Hill, Alabama, the program serves thirty-seven municipalities within the nine counties of Southwest Alabama that comprises the Ala-Tom Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D).

Background: Ala-Tom RC&D Council has a history of providing urban forestry assistance to its constituents. In 1996, Ala-Tom RC&D coordinator Norman Burton recognized the need for a full-time staff urban forestry professional. Communities within the nine-county region were too small or economically depressed to individually fund an urban forester. Therefore, the Ala-Tom RC&D created The Southwest Alabama Urban Forestry Program which allows communities to share the costs and services of an urban forester. The program received a \$10,000 Urban and Community Forestry award as start-up funds. Today, the program is fully self-sufficient with funding from the 13 participating communities. Annual contributions from the participating communities go toward the urban forester's salary and the USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service furnish an office and vehicle. The Ala-Tom RC&D Council provides administrative support.

Activities: The SAUFP Urban Forester has a variety of responsibilities that include but are not limited to:

- Work with Existing Tree Commissions
- Form New Tree Commissions
- Develop and Implement Model Tree Ordinances
- Develop Basic Urban Forestry Efforts for Municipalities through the use of:
 - Tree Inventories
 - Proper Maintenance Practices
 - Project Design
 - Planting Projects
- Provide Technical Assistance to Both Municipalities and Homeowners
- Promote and Support the Tree City USA Program

Since the inception of this program, more than \$150,000 in additional grant funds has been secured. These funds have enabled the program to conduct numerous planting projects, tree inventories, hazard tree assessments, training seminars, and the development of several Outdoor Classrooms and Learning Centers as well as improving the overall quality of the Urban Forests of Southwest Alabama.

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