

## Small Town Taking Big Steps to Improve Urban Forest

OAK GROVE –Corene Dean and Carolyn Ziegler have two things in common. Both are retired Town Clerks for Oak Grove, Alabama and both are providing their time to help the community develop a plan for its urban trees.

“We don’t have a systematic plan for managing our municipal trees nor the resources to employ a full-time professional to do this,” said Dean. “With the loss of trees to Hurricane Ivan, we realized that we must perform a study to determine the species most suitable to accomplish our goals of a living, long-term and evolving urban forest.”

For Dean, that possibility is being realized through US Forest Service funds awarded by Auburn University through its Urban & Community (U&CF) Forestry Financial Assistance Program. The \$4,340.45 federal award will be combined with an equal amount in local matching.

Oak Grove will use the funds to pay a professional to collect data on the Town’s street trees. Each tree will be assessed and located by a handheld GPS locator. The Town will also survey every homeowner to learn their interest in a local community tree program. Residents interested in volunteering their time will be invited to form a committee. Information from both surveys will be used to develop an urban forest management plan.

“We couldn’t have handled a project like this in our small town without the federal funds and an adequate group of volunteers,” said Ziegler. If everything works right, we’ll enter information in our Town’s comprehensive plan through the East Alabama Regional Planning Commission’s mapping program.”