

High School Students + Community Tree Inventory + STRATUM = Success

An Urban and Urbanizing Forests Extension Program of the School of Forest Resources and Conservation, IFAS/UF

The value of trees in urban areas and the concept of urban forestry are not widely known among urban residents. This October, a two-week urban forestry module was pilot-tested at A.D. Harris High School (AD High) in Panama City. The objective of this project was to determine if high school students or community volunteers could undertake a tree inventory using the new i-Tree software, understand the results, and apply what they learned.

Students participated in hands-on activities focused on defining urban forestry, tree biology and benefits to gain a better understanding of the role of trees to their community. Community partners, Smurfit-Stone Container Corporation,

“Teachers concluded that students had an increased understanding of the benefits of urban forests and that the hands-on element kept student’s engaged during this program.”

Florida Society of American Foresters, and Florida Division of Forestry, taught students tree identification techniques and explained urban forest management issues in Panama City. Armed with diameter tapes and tree ID books, students were eager to collect data that would provide information on the benefits of AD High’s urban forest.

Data collected on species, DBH, and tree condition were entered by our staff into STRATUM (Street Tree Analysis Tool for Urban Forest Managers), a tree benefits model that is part of the i-Tree suite of programs. Once the data was analyzed, the students were given the results, explained the benefits as to how they related to their work, and then allowed to come to their own conclusions.

The information provided by STRATUM helped students to better understand the AD High urban forest and to suggest tree management concerns to the principal. Their tree inventory provided information about the structure, function, and management needs of the trees on their campus.

The two-week unit ended with a field trip linking what the students learned to real-life application, hurricane impacts and trees, and career options. Teachers concluded that students had an increased understanding of the benefits of urban forests and that the hands-on element kept student’s engaged during this program.

If high school kids understand the concept of urban forest structure, function and management, there is no reason why citizens or communities couldn’t use these same principles to promote and advocate Florida’s urban forests. Expansion to additional high schools, implementation of a teacher training workshop, and development of an expanded urban forest unit are planned for 2008.



School of Forest Resources and
Conservation, UF/IFAS
PO Box 110410
Gainesville, FL 32611

Phone: (352) 846-2329
Email: flurbanforests@ifas.ufl.edu
<http://sfrc.ufl.edu/urbanforestry>