

TreeVitalize to Plant 1 Million Trees Statewide

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HARRISBURG, Pa., Oct. 21 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Building on the success of TreeVitalize in southeastern Pennsylvania, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is launching a statewide tree planting program in metropolitan areas, with a goal of planting one million trees over the next five years.

"Trees make us feel great, improve the quality of life in communities and increase property values, but they are disappearing in metropolitan areas across the state, and we want to reverse this alarming trend," said DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis at a tree planting event in Allentown. "We can all learn so much by planting a tree: how we need to take care of the things that make our world better; how a small action can make a big difference; and how important living things are to many other elements of our communities.

"TreeVitalize is working to spread these messages to local governments and homeowners as we move toward our goal of planting one million trees in the next five years," DiBerardinis added.

TreeVitalize Metros is a partnership of DCNR, Pennsylvania Community Forests, Penn State Extension Urban Foresters, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and local governments.

The overall goal of the program is to help revitalize urban areas by increasing tree cover. Tree cover refers to the percentage of land shaded by trees and shrubs.

Specifically, TreeVitalize Metros plans to:

-- Plant one million trees over the next five years through this and other programs; -- Train 10,000 community volunteers to help plant and provide early care of trees; and -- Build community capacity for the long-term management of urban forests.

"TreeVitalize already has planted 20,000 large trees and about 70,000 smaller trees and seedlings along streams in southeastern Pennsylvania, and was officially launched in Pittsburgh this past spring," DiBerardinis said. "This fall, we are expanding TreeVitalize to the Lehigh Valley, Lancaster and Erie. By the end of 2009, we hope to have the program operating in each of the state's 14 metropolitan areas."

TreeVitalize Metros provides matching grants for tree-planting and technical assistance to help establish urban forest management programs.

DCNR intends to commit \$5 million to the statewide effort.

The following investments are being made this fall through DCNR's community conservation partnerships grant program:

-- City of Erie, \$42,500 to implement a tree planting program in the city, including the awarding mini-grants; -- Lehigh County, \$200,000 to implement a tree planting program in Lehigh and Northampton counties, including the awarding of mini-grants; -- Columbia Borough, \$15,000 to implement a tree planting program in the borough; and -- City of Lancaster, \$25,000 to implement a tree planting program in the city.

Tree plantings were held today at Pfeiffer Burleigh Elementary School, East 12th St., Erie; Susquehanna Bank, 12th and Hamilton Sts., Allentown; and 625 E. King St., Lancaster.

For more information about TreeVitalize, visit www.treevitalize.net.

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SOURCE Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

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