

2006 Annual Report
MISSOURI
ForestKeepers
A SUMMARY OF NETWORK ACTIVITIES

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In the ten years since the Missouri Forestkeepers Network was launched, volunteers have monitored trees, improved their forests, and planted trees. Some of the most active and dedicated members have been with the program since the beginning, while others have joined just in the last year. The program has grown and expanded, going well beyond the original intent simply to monitor Missouri's forests. Consider the mission of the program today...

To develop a network of informed citizens working to conserve, sustain and enhance Missouri's urban and rural forest resources through volunteerism, advocacy and management.

The Missouri Forestkeepers Network is a program designed to develop a network of informed citizens working to conserve, sustain and enhance Missouri's urban and rural forest resources through volunteerism, advocacy, and management.

We want Missourians who:

- Are aware of the benefits of trees and forests to the state of Missouri
- Understand forest and woodland communities
- Support and participate in the management of forest and woodland communities on public and private land
- Serve as informed advocates concerning current forestry issues

To achieve these goals, we are:

- Exploring partnerships with other programs and organizations with a similar purpose
- Enhancing communication and networking among members to promote statewide volunteer opportunities
- Providing technical training across the state and materials to members to improve their level of expertise
- Strengthening the use of materials by targeting recruitment efforts and creating appropriate recruitment tools
- Increasing the number of returned Activity Reports with the goal of achieving reports from 10% of the current membership
- Updating the program's strategic plan



IMPACT ON MISSOURI'S FORESTS

The Missouri Forestkeepers Network was busy in 2006! The program experienced increases in almost every area, including enrollment, participation, and volunteer hours.

There were a total of 1,885 members at the close of the calendar year. This includes 214 new members who joined in 2006 and represents a 27% increase in membership. A significant percentage of the new members learned about the program through a recruitment letter mailed to educators around the state. Another 18% of the new members found the program through a referral and 17% discovered Forestkeepers through the program's website.

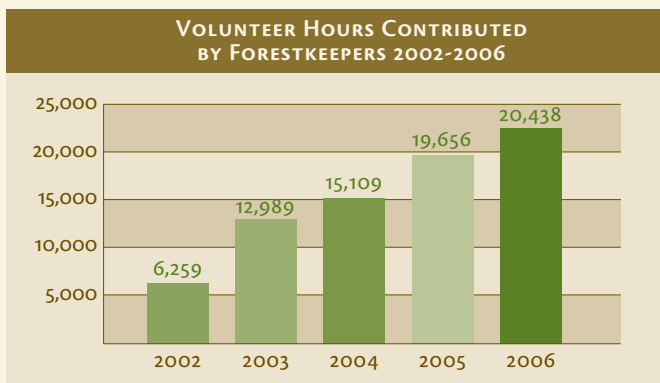
The spring and fall reporting periods resulted in a total of 141 reports submitted, which documented 633 activities overall. Members and those who worked with Forestkeepers on their projects spent 22,438 hours working with trees.

Here are the most popular activities undertaken:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF MEMBERS INVOLVED
Planted trees	443
Picked up trash or otherwise maintained a public area	430
Cared for trees (e.g. mulched, pruned, staked, or watered trees)	345
Submitted a Tree Observation Form	319
Helped build/enhance an outdoor classroom	270
Voiced environmental concerns at meeting	222

Many volunteers invested significant hours in the activities they undertook. Here are the activities where the most time was spent:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF HOURS INVESTED
Cared for trees (e.g. mulched, pruned, staked, or watered trees)	2,012
Participated in a TSI program	1,236
Planted trees	1,037
Treated unwanted vegetation	896
Installed or maintained a water source for wildlife	515



The total dollar value of this time was a remarkable \$404,782*. In 2006, Forestkeepers reported contributing over 2,700 more volunteer hours than in 2005.

* Based on the Independent Sector's valuation of \$18.04 per hour for volunteer time. For more information, visit www.independentsector.org.

SURVEY RESULTS

A total of 393 surveys were returned by members. This is twice as many completed questionnaires as the previous survey. Here are the highlights:

Overall Program

When asked if the program meets the members' expectations, 74% said, "Yes" and 21% said, "Don't Know." Many noted the educational nature of the program, the tools available to help students, and the newsletter as being the most valuable aspects of the program.

Most of the respondents who said the program did not meet their expectations indicated that they were looking for a more scientific approach to monitoring. Other ideas to improve the program included more workshops and increasing the size of the newsletter.

Participation

Forty-two percent of respondents indicated they had returned a *Tree Observation Form* or *Activity Report* in the last two years. Those who had not indicated that time constraints, reluctance to submit inaccurate information, or health were the primary obstacles.

Forestkeepers Website

About a third of respondents had visited the Forestkeepers website at *www.forestkeepers.org*. Those who had never been to the site noted that they didn't know it existed, or that they didn't have access to the internet. Content, ease of use, and the links were the best features noted by those who had visited the site. Suggested improvements include more tree identification information, lesson plans, and tree insect and disease diagnoses help.

Training

A large majority of the members ranked training on tree identification, tree pest management, and general tree care as significant training needs. While many expressed interest in a particular training topic, attending a workshop or field training event wasn't as desirable as receiving that information through the newsletter or some other written publication.

Newsletter

The majority of respondents like the newsletter. Overall it was rated highly, with the ease of use and content being the most pleasing features. Some of the suggested features to add to the publication include a seasonal issues section, regular features on member activities, and a forest threats update corner. Numerous ideas for potential articles were submitted. They will be reviewed in the coming months as we set content for future issues.



PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Calendar year 2006 hummed with activity at the state level. Here are a few highlights:

- The *Second Annual Hunt for Strange and Extraordinary Trees* was held with numerous intriguing and amusing entries received.
- Richard Hashagen was presented with the combined 2005 Land Steward of the Year and the 2005 Environmental Educator of the Year awards.
- A new educator version of the Forestkeepers enrollment brochure was produced.
- A letter and the new educator brochure were mailed to nearly 1,100 school leaders and agricultural instructors around the state, resulting in many new members.
- A *Student Tree Observations* form was designed and printed.
- Print ads were developed and placed in key magazines including *Rural Missouri*, the *Missouri Ruralist*, and *School & Community*, a publication of the Missouri State Teachers Association.
- At the annual Forestkeepers Conference in Blue Springs in June, members and their guests enjoyed educational sessions on tree identification and pest problems.
- Two tree care workshops were offered.
- The Missouri Woodland Steward program was promoted to members to provide opportunities for advanced training.
- A binder to house Technical Bulletins and back issues of the newsletter was added to the choice of member incentives, along with a lunch sack. Each item sports the new logo.
- Three new Forestkeepers illustrations were finalized.
- A focus group meeting was held, resulting in many valuable ideas for the future of the program.
- Tree observation data was posted on the website.
- An *Oak Wilt Monitoring* form was made available in early spring. Many branch samples were received from members, although just a handful of those were confirmed as having the disease.
- The search for Butternut trees continues, with many samples submitted in 2006. Confirmed trees are added to the PLANTS database as they are received. The result to date is that pockets of trees are confirmed in several previously unrecorded counties.
- A survey of members was conducted late in the year.





Looking Ahead *in 2007*

Activity in 2007 is already well underway. It was a busy spring, culminating with the Annual Forestkeepers Conference in St. Charles in early June, featuring a new session on working with the media and advocacy tips. The tree identification workshops offered across the state in May were very popular, and the tree pest training provided in two locations in early summer was also well received.

There will be a new monitoring opportunity in the fall as we ask for members' help to assess nut production. Data collected by Forestkeepers will be added to that collected by the Missouri Department of Conservation in southern Missouri to get a better idea of the food available for wildlife in the state.

Finally, in response to results from the Member Survey, we plan to add some new features to the web site as we freshen its design. We will also be carefully considering the ideas members offered for new features in the newsletter.

Missouri's forests are among our most important natural resources. The Missouri Department of Conservation is proud of our partnership with Forest ReLeaf of Missouri in administering the Missouri Forestkeepers Network. But most importantly, we are proud of, and very grateful for, the many contributions of the members and citizens who volunteer to help us care for this critical resource. Together we can work to assure healthy and sustainable forests in Missouri.

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