
Regional Community Forestry Program

Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments

Community Forestry Elements



Inventory and Assessment

- Cataloging species, health, size, location, and condition

Planning and Policy

- Tree ordinances, plans, priority areas

Planting and Maintenance

- Species selection, planting programs, pruning and care

Pest/Disease Management and Resilience

- Monitoring, response plans, technology and data

Community Engagement and Education

- Promoting the benefits of an urban canopy, activities for adults and kids

Program Summary

*The Upper Coastal Plain Regional Community Forestry Program **connects** the economically distressed UCPCOG region with an existing, local knowledge base and a variety of practical tools with the goal of expanding the region's **community canopy** to create more livable, walkable, and shaded neighborhoods which are more resilient to the impacts of extreme heat and foster an improved quality of life.*

Program Origins



NC Climate Action Corps (AmeriCorps) member assigned to UCPCOG

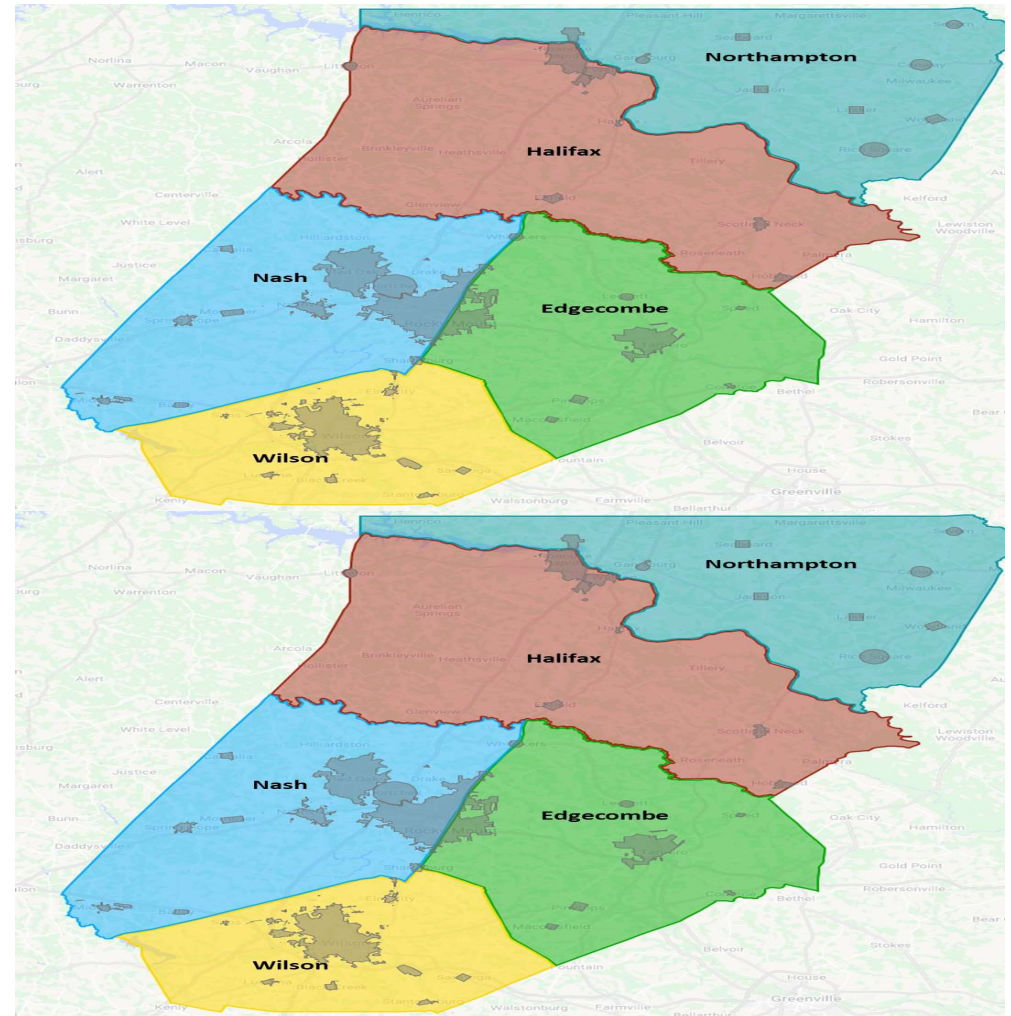
- Resilience Project Coordinator
- Two 11-month terms
- Regional capacity building surrounding resilience (flooding, extreme heat) as primary focus

Resilience Project Coordinator (John)

- A semi-retired certified arborist (non-traditional AmeriCorps member)
- Long-time local of Wilson with a deep network
- CTNC (assigning entity) was supportive of adding a community forestry focus to both terms (more established in term two which ended early)
- UCPCOG Board of Directors thrilled to have an arborist on staff – we found a new world of unmet needs and opportunities

Coalition of the Willing

- No member governments were obligated to work with John during his term, but he was accessible to all.
- Those with the most interest in community forestry worked with him the most, including some of our smallest municipalities:
 - Conetoe (200)
 - Castalia (275)
 - Hobgood (348)
 - Rich Square (849)



Partnerships

- In addition to support from CTNC and AmeriCorps, the North Carolina Forest Service offered support and partnership to help establish the program.
- Advice from other COGs was very beneficial, especially from WPCOG
- Parks and recreation departments and planning departments were the most interested in the subject and willing to provide input.
- Our Board of Directors were supportive of the new focus area which tied into the CEDS



Deliverables

Each program deliverable is tailored to the member government. They included:

- *Development of a town-wide or site-specific **tree planting plan** (with focus on providing heat resilience and beautification)*
- *Review of public **tree maintenance** needs*
- *Project development for NC Forest Service **grant programs** (including grant writing)*
- ***Coordination and convening** of service providers (NCDOT, county foresters, private developers)*
- ***Tree education** for elected boards, planning boards, or other community groups*
- ***Tree inventory** (limited without additional funding)*



Conetoe Town Hall Park Tree Planting Plan



John at Castalia Community Park with Mayor Alston locating planting locations for a grant application.

Downtown Street Trees

Environmental Benefits

- Air Quality Improvements
- Temperature Regulation
- Stormwater Management

Economic Benefits

- Increased Property Values
- Shopper/Pedestrian Attraction
- Energy Savings

Livability Benefits

- Visual Appeal
- Noise Reduction
- Traffic Calming
- Wildlife Habitat

Other Tree Canopy Benefits

Social and Health Benefits

- Reduced stress
- increased social interaction
- Promoting physical activity outdoors

Crime Reduction

- Well-maintained green spaces are associated with reduced crime and increased vigilance

Visual Appeal

- People will be prouder of where they live
- Neighborhoods will look better



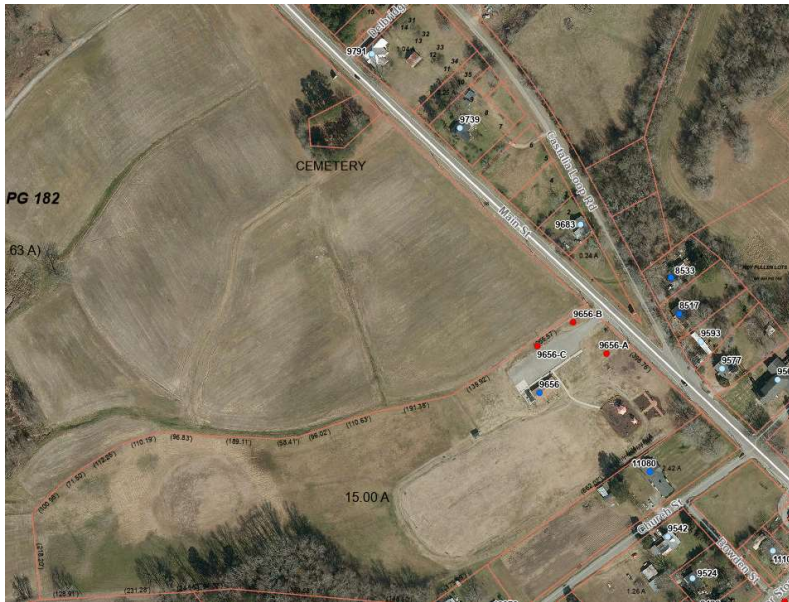
Hobgood Street Trees

- Hobgood (pop. 348) is working to redevelop their main street. They control the row of buildings pictured left and have funds to renovate them.
- We developed a downtown tree planting plan to complement the project.
- Current holly trees block the buildings, are aging and in need of removal (many already removed due to safety concerns), and create a heavy burden for town staff.
- More appropriate trees which improve the look of the street, do not interfere with the power lines (town-controlled), and provide shade for pedestrians will be planted once funding is secured.
- Hobgood selected a type of red cedar to replace the holly trees that have a more upright growth habit.



Downtown Trees in Wilson

- Wilson Warbirds pose a significant opportunity (*spurred additional interest in downtown trees*)
- A long-standing interest in street trees and urban canopy was reinvigorated with our assistance
 - Wilson obtained its first TreeLine USA Certification in 2024 and was reestablished as a TreeCity USA thanks to new coordination between the planning department and municipal utility (Wilson Energy)
 - We are now working with Barton College to help them obtain a TreeCamp USA Certification (a trifecta)
- A tree-focused non-profit is under development



Castalia Community Park Tree Plan

- Castalia (pop. 275) approached us about a few tree maintenance concerns in the right-of-way
- We connected them with NCDOT about pruning services, which included two in person meetings and ride along that led to state-funded tree maintenance along the town's main street.
- A new development adjacent to the park currently under construction will nearly double Castalia's population.
- We encouraged the town to work with the developer to fund tree plantings at the park, which will provide shade and beautify the neighborhood's surroundings.

UAV Technology

- UCPCOG offered a drone pilot license training (FAA Part 107) in March 2025, leveraging the momentum of the regional community forestry program.
- Cities of Roanoke Rapids and Wilson and UCPCOG split the cost, and several attendees are now certified.
- Benefits of UAV Technology to community forestry include:
 - Damage/health assessments
 - Mapping (including heat mapping and LiDAR)
 - Monitoring and threat detection
 - Inventory (3D renderings)





After AmeriCorps

- Our second service year was cut short halfway through, but the level of interest in community forestry from our Board while John was in service was eye-opening.
- We have retained John as a consultant with limited hours (6-8 per week) until more funds are obtained.
- Grants to support local or regional community forestry, including grants to plant trees, are severely limited. The IRA included a significant amount of funding that would have enabled us to take the next step.
- John's time is more focused, but our goal is still to develop a regional program that benefits all member governments.

COG's Role

UPPER
COASTAL
PLAIN



COMPREHENSIVE
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY
2023 - 2027

- The Upper Coastal Plain CEDS includes a strong focus on placemaking and public health, both of which these community forestry activities support.
- Developing and continuing this program supports our role as a regionally-owned repository for data, tools (like a UAV), and expertise that our member governments would otherwise have to seek elsewhere on their own.
- By tackling this subject regionally, we can help ensure that partnerships and educational opportunities are shared across borders, which will make things easier for the NC Forest Service and NCDOT

Thank You

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