

Cities and the Environment

2010

Volume 3, Issue 1

Article 2

MillionTreesNYC, Green Infrastructure and Urban Ecology Symposium March 5-6, 2010

Erika S. Svendsen and Jacqueline W.T. Lu

The MillionTreesNYC Subcommittee on Research and Evaluation was formed shortly following the 2007 launch of MillionTreesNYC, a citywide, public-private initiative with an ambitious goal: to plant and care for one million new trees across New York City's five boroughs by 2017. Members of this committee are comprised of academics, government researchers and local practitioners with experience in the fields of natural resource management and community development.

Over the past few years, we've hosted presentations on urban tree canopy and assessment, collaborated on research proposals, provided feedback to our colleagues on current research, convened workshops and field trips and developed a research agenda. Our primary motivation was to improve communication between researchers and practitioners, and leverage this ambitious initiative as an opportunity to learn more about our urban ecosystem. We wanted to create access to data and study sites and to support a process where research results were transformed into meaningful actions to improve our urban environment and human well being.

On March 5-6, 2010, over two hundred researchers and practitioners came together at The New School to showcase scientific innovation in the field of urban forestry and greening. The *MillionTreesNYC, Green Infrastructure and Urban Ecology Research Symposium* engaged professionals from a broad range of disciplines including sociology, planning, epidemiology, earth sciences, hydrology, forestry, ecology, and design who were uniquely positioned to discuss new ideas. The conference featured seven invited speakers, thirty-one contributed papers and thirty-five posters. A special thanks must go to David Maddox of Sound Science who focused our Symposium planning, guided us through the review of submitted papers, moderated the sessions and essentially helped us pull off this great meeting. The session opened with Thomas Elmquist of Stockholm University challenging our group to broaden our thinking about resilience theories and creating capacity within communities to deal with uncertainty and change. We heard from researchers working on issues of climate change, biodiversity, public health, and new modes of governance in cities including Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles, Portland, Baltimore, and Washington, DC.

Svendsen and Lu: Symposium Introduction

We were honored to have our own homegrown experts from community organizations and local agencies including New York City Department of Parks & Recreation and the Department of Environmental Protection share how they have adapted their work to create opportunities for research and data collection. David Bragdon of the Portland Metro Council gave the keynote presentation on the importance of collaboration, conservation and shared governance; he has since relocated to New York City in his new capacity as the Director of the Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning & Sustainability. Our Symposium was concluded with an inspiring speech by NYC Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe who reminded us that Parks and New York City are dedicated to restoration and preservation of our natural resources.

Out of a desire to share what we had learned with a broader audience, we approached the editors of *Cities and the Environment* with an idea for a special issue. The journal was a natural fit for us as it supports scholarship with, by and for urban ecology researchers, educators and practitioners. We'd like to thank the editors for their support and encouragement on this issue. A special thanks goes to one of our committee members, Dexter Locke of the NYC Urban Field Station, who volunteered to serve as a special editor for this edition and was central to the publication of this special issue.

Finally, we'd like to thank the MillionTreesNYC program managers as well as the hard work and good humor of our core committee members, Timon McPhearson and Richard Karty from the New School, Marianne Krasny and Keith Tidball of Cornell University, Simon McDonnell of New York University's Furman Center for Real Estate and Policy, David Maddox of Sound Science, Lindsay Campbell of the U.S. Forest Service, Faisal al-Juburi of New York Restoration Project, and Morgan Monaco, Andrew Newman, Chisato Shimada and Ruth Rae of New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. We hope that this issue attracts new interest, creativity and engagement in our urban forests and natural areas.

Erika S. Svendsen
Research Social Scientist
USDA Forest Service
Northern Research Station

Jacqueline W.T. Lu
Director of Research and Analysis
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation