

Recommendations considered but not made

- There was considerable discussion by the Regulations, Legislation and Funding Working Group about the need to accelerate the time after a storm whereby a “make safe” call could be made by the utilities so that municipalities could clear roads of debris for essential purposes such as ensuring a safe path for emergency vehicles. It was determined that utilizing private contractors for “make safe” calls may not be possible, and that Northeast Utilities, in particular, was working toward an internal remedy to this problem.
- The Task Force has received several comments from the public about “undergrounding” electrical utility wires as one way to better secure the electrical utility infrastructure without the need to remove trees. There are many valid arguments on all sides of this issue, but the Task Force did not see it as of central relevance to our focus on vegetation management to reduce the risks of future storms – a scope that stretches beyond a strict focus on utility infrastructure. We do agree that it is an important issue that should be properly explored by another group of experts focusing on hardening Connecticut’s infrastructure for greater power reliability in the future.
- The Task Force was unable to propose Utility Right-of-Way management within the time constraints allotted to the group. One of the fundamental research papers that the Task Force has reviewed is the seminal work by Professors William A. Niering and Richard H. Goodwin at Connecticut College in 1974 entitled “Creation of Relatively Stable Shrublands with Herbicides: Arresting “Succession” on Rights-of-Way and Pastureland.” More work must be done on this important topic.

IV. Conclusion

One of our Task Force Members recently asked the question: “How much will the next storm cost us?” Of course, that question is unanswerable, but we do know that Connecticut’s roadside forest has generally been under-managed and under-resourced for decades and we are paying the price today for that benign neglect by suffering extensive and expensive damage caused by falling trees and branches during storms.

We have enjoyed benefits from our roadside forests for many years, but we have been unwilling to make the necessary maintenance and replanting investments that are essential if we are to enjoy continued benefits from a healthy roadside forest. Our current benign neglect of the roadside forest would be like buying a new car and ignoring routine maintenance (e.g., changing the oil) or not replacing broken parts like worn out brakes pads. This has to change if we wish to look forward to a more storm-resistant roadside forest, but we must begin taking positive action now:

- Private tree owners must take an active role in understanding their obligations for stewardship of their trees. Along with recognizing the benefits that trees provide, they should also recognize that poor stewardship reduces potential tree benefits and impacts the health and well-being of their community;
- Municipalities must invest in the tree wardens, to increase their overall knowledge and capabilities in managing a critical public resource. Municipalities must make plans to manage their roadside forests better by taking inventory of what they have, conducting risk assessments, and determining the local balance required to both enhance safety and respect the aesthetics of their community’s character;
- The State must show leadership and provide expertise, incentives, and funding to help ensure that when trees fail or are removed, they are replaced by the Right Tree in the Right Place;
- The Utilities must look for opportunities to partner with landowners to maintain and establish a future healthy roadside forest;
- In particular, funding and resources must be directed to the municipalities, which have enormous responsibilities regarding the public's trees but often very little capacity to meet those responsibilities. Without additional funding and resources for municipalities, the state can only make the most minimal efforts to improve the management and planting practices alongside of its roads and highways.

The time to act is NOW, though we understand the dedicated work of managing the roadside forest will take place over several decades. However, if we wish to achieve a healthy roadside

forest for Connecticut with shared benefits for our communities, then we must be willing to assume the shared responsibilities necessary to care for it.

To usher the implementation of these recommendations forward, we have taken the liberty of sketching out an initial “To Do List” on the following page showing some of the proposed actions and the organizations who we anticipate will be leading and/or supporting various efforts.

Shared Initial To Do List/Actions	CT DEEP	ConnDOT	Municipalities	Utilities	CAES	UConn	Tree Wardens Assn	NGO's ⁸
Tree warden certification standards	P				S		P	
Tree removal standards	P	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Tree maintenance schedule standards	S	P	P	P	S		P	
Model roadside forest management plan	P	P	S	S	S	S	S	S
Implement roadside forest mgt plan	S	P	P	P			P	
Development of municipal budget request			P				P	S
Advocate for funding of roadside forest management in legislature	P		P	P	S		P	P
Advocate for legislation related to Task Force recommendations	P	P	P	S	S		S	P
Pursue funding for roadside forest management from other sources	S		S	S	S		S	P
Initiatives regarding Right tree, Right place	P	S	S	S	P	S	S	S
Host website for education and outreach	P				P	S		S
Education and outreach - tree care	P		S	S	P	S	S	P
Print & Disseminate Public Education Brochures	P		S	S	P	S	S	S
Request FEMA post-storm standards recognize tree care standards	P	P	S	S			S	S
Coordinated management to include trees, utilities, roads, property and people	S	S	P	P			S	
Roadside tree research	S				P	P		
Roadside forest research	S				P	P		
Coordination of Inventory & GIS Mapping of roadside forest	P	S	S	S	S	S		
P = Primary Takes the initiative in the particular area, develops alternatives, analyzes situation.	S = Support Consulted by or plays a support role to the Primary party.							

⁸ NGO's include the Connecticut Urban Forest Council, the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, AudubonCT and many others.