



City of Thief River Falls

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
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2018 FORESTRY REPORT

CITY OF

THIEF RIVER FALLS

History

The City of Thief River Falls has gone through significant changes with forestry in recent years. Prior to 2009, forestry was handled through the Park and Recreation Department with designated City Forester Myles Olson. In 2009 after Myles retired, the city shifted the duties to the Street/Sanitation Department. The current city council felt the responsibilities of forestry justified a dedicated position and also felt it was best handled under the Park Department as historically done with great success.

Brian Benitt transferred from the Street/Sanitation Department to the recreated position of City Forester/Park Maintenance in the Park Department early in 2017. Additional changes came in July of 2017 when the city council recreated a Public Works Department. The Public Works Department includes Parks, which the City Forester is a part of, with the support of the Street/Sanitation and other Public Works Department staff to accomplish the duties of forestry.

Work Outline - Forestry

The City Forester position encompasses a broad range of duties that includes maintenance and reforestation activities to preserve and maintain the City's parks, boulevards, beaches and park facilities. The primary responsibility for the position is to manage the urban forest in Thief River Falls on both public and private property. A key function for this management is the inspection, identification, removal and replacement of diseased or dead trees. Dutch Elm Disease (DED) trees account for the largest amount of time and resources spent each year to maintain the urban forest. In 2018, there were 97 DED trees removed on public property by the forester and 33 removed on private property by the homeowner or a contractor through the city. The majority of Dutch elm disease trees removed in 2018 were located in the northwest part of the city. In addition to the DED trees the city removed 59 other trees, mainly diseased Canadian Cherry, Boxelders, Hybrid Poplars and Pine trees under power lines and 22 trees/stumps were removed for new construction.

There is little data available for 2010 through 2016, but DED trees removed from 2003 through 2009 and 2017 through 2018 are identified below.



The City Forester also plants new trees to replace those lost to Dutch Elm, as well as, new trees in right-of-ways, parks and public spaces. In 2018, there were 150 new Red Buds, Ohio Buckeyes, Silver Maples and Hot Wing Maples planted on boulevards, parks and at the MEC.

These varieties were chosen based on their compatibility to our climate, suitability for boulevards and availability from suppliers. Below are the tree varieties proposed for 2019 planting.



American Linden



Little Leaf Linden



St. Croix American Elm

Other forestry duties include winter tree pruning and removal of site obstructions, preparation of planting plans and ordering trees, as well as removal of other public owned dead trees of various varieties.

Work Outline – Park Maintenance

The City Forester performs other duties such as sidewalk and trail snow removal. The city has over six miles of these walks that requires snow and ice removal, taking approximately one full day per each snow or wind event. Snow periods are not typically conducive for tree removal and pruning so this work fits well for the position.

Mosquito control is also completed by this position. It requires mosquito counts be taken on a daily basis with spraying required as needed. In 2018, spraying only occurred two times as it was a dry year. Mosquito spraying typically occurs approximately eight times per year.

The City Forester also handles herbicide applications on city owned properties for weed control. In 2018, they sprayed spring, fall and intermediate applications as needed.

The remainder of the City Forester's time is spent on equipment maintenance and repair along with park maintenance operations, public assistance and public relations.

Submitted by:

Brian Benitt, City Forester