



City of Thief River Falls

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2019 FORESTRY REPORT CITY OF THIEF RIVER FALLS

History

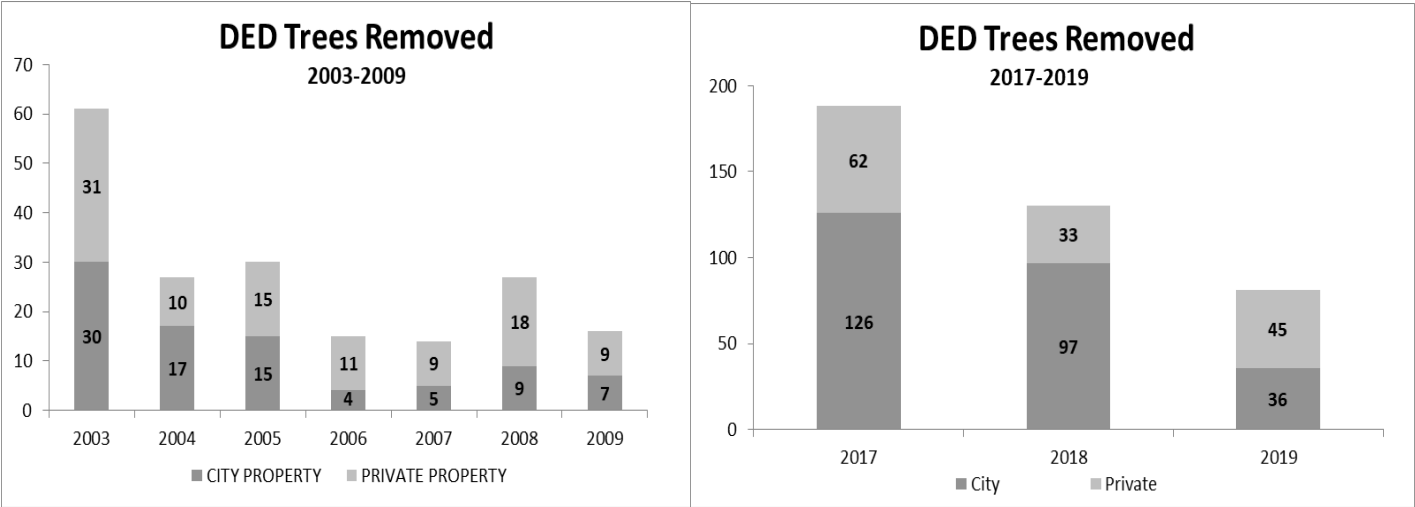
The City of Thief River Falls has gone through significant changes with forestry in recent years. Prior to 2009, forestry was handled through the Park and Recreation Department with designated City Forester Myles Olson. In 2009 after Myles retired, the city shifted the duties to the Street/Sanitation 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 2019, there were 36 DED trees removed on public property by the forester and 45 removed on private property by the homeowner or a contractor through the city. In addition to the DED trees the city removed 19 other trees, mainly diseased Canadian Cherry, Boxelders and Hybrid Poplars. 37 tree stumps were removed by the contractor and the City Forester assisted with 14 of those removals.

There is little data available for 2010 through 2016, but DED trees removed from 2003 through 2009 and 2017 through 2019 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 2019, there were 125 new Sugar Maples, Boulevard Lindens and Northern Pin Oaks 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 2020 planting & 145 trees were ordered. These trees will replace trees on the boulevards, 25 trees out at the MEC, and 20 trees will be going to the new electric building.



American Linden

Autumn Blaze Maple

Valley Forge Elm

Princeton 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 2019, spraying occurred four times. Mosquito spraying typically occurs approximately eight times per year.

The City Forester also handles herbicide applications on city owned properties for weed control. In 2019, 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. The city forester also operates equipment as needed along with other public works staff in general snow removal operations.

Submitted by:

Brian Benitt, City Forester