



# City of Thief River Falls

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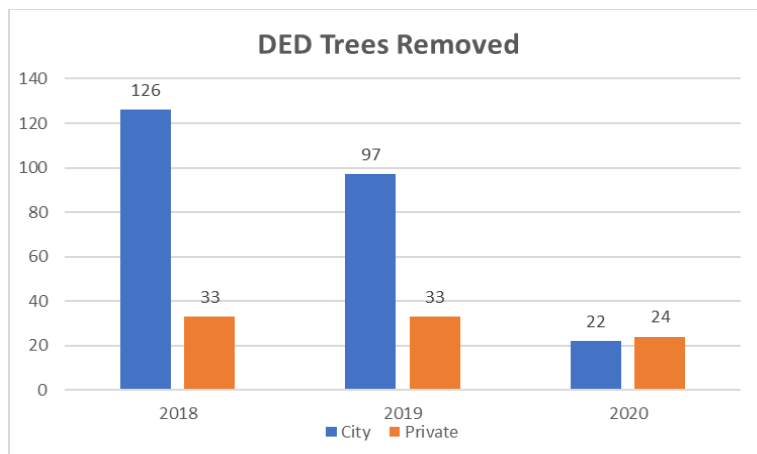
## 2020 FORESTRY REPORT CITY OF THIEF RIVER FALLS

### History

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, beach 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 2020, there were 22 DED trees removed on public property by the forester and 24 removed on private property by the homeowner or a contractor through the city. This number was down substantially from previous years. In addition to the DED trees the city removed 52 other trees that were either damaged from the summer storms or naturally dead. Tree trimming along the boulevards and alleys began the end of July and finished at the end of September.



## **Work Outline – Tree Planting**

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 2020, there were 150 new trees were planted in the spring. 25 of them went to the MEC and 35 went to the new Electric Department Building. The rest were planted on boulevards and parks as replacements for the previously removed trees. The trees planted were a variety of Maples, Ohio Buckeye, Lindens and DED resistant Elms.

## **Work Outline – Park Maintenance/Mosquitoes/Herbicide**

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. The City received 63.5” of snow in the 2019-2020 season, with city sidewalk and trail snow removal taking place 22 times. 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 to be taken daily with spraying required as needed. In 2020, mosquito control went well with spraying occurring four times in early to mid-summer. Larviciding efforts and less rainfall also helped with keeping mosquito counts low.

The City Forester also handles herbicide applications on city owned properties for weed control. In spring 2020, nature cooperated, and all city property was sprayed for broad leaf weeds. Fall weather did not cooperate. High winds and early frost prevented a fall spraying. We did purchase a self-propelled curtain sprayer which will allow us to spray on windier days without having to worry about a strong drift of chemical. Normal spraying required wind speeds to be under 10 mph and even less when spraying in parks and adjacent to residential property containing flower gardens and decorative plants.

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