Executive Director's Summer 2020 Report

www.gicinc.org

Karen Firehock and Matt Lee in front of the new office

GIC enters 2020 in the midst of a Pandemic. We are so sorry to see many who are suffering and for those who have lost loved ones, but we are also pleased to witness the many ways communities are also resilient. Communities are making themselves greener and healthier though events such as "Trees in Trunks" held in one of our partner cities of Boynton Beach FL. This event gave away hundreds of trees safely. Trees clean the air and lead to improved health and less respiratory illness – so planting trees and managing them are key to combatting the Covid Virus. Healthy urban forests mean healthier, more resilient people too!

In June 2020, we also moved to a new space in Scottsville VA along the James River – this historic storefront location allows us to work while social distancing and, when the Pandemic is over, we will hold classes and community events! In 2020 we also welcomed our new community forester and planner Mathew Lee (see image right), who has many years of experience monitoring natural landscapes, and leading survey and planting crews. We hope you'll consider partnering safely with us in 2020 – we do much of our work with satellite and flown imagery, so we can still map and plan for urban forests, wildlife corridors, protecting water quality and supplies and planning better access to open spaces. Our community meetings have moved on line, but we are still in close collaboration with many of you! Learn more about us at http://www.gicinc.org/staff.htm

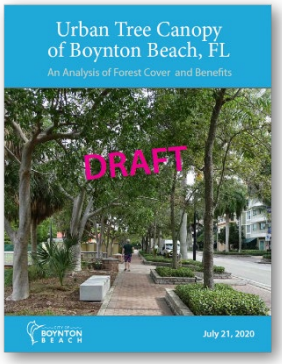
Current Projects

Resilient Coastal Forests Project

The Green Infrastructure Center (GIC), Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF), Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) and South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC) are evaluating threats that impact coastal forests. The Resilient Coastal Forests (RCF) project is funded by the US Forest Service. Coastal forests are impacted by various threats - from development, to insects, to changes in weather, to fire risks. Climate change can cause both longer periods of drought, as well as more extreme weather events (high winds and greater amounts of rain). Longer and hotter periods can cause tree stress and make forests more susceptible to pest damage. Salt can damage coastal forests far from the shore, as hurricanes carry saline water inland. Furthermore, permanent changes in sea levels can deplete coastal forest buffers. The RCF project is looking at the condition of our coastal forests and the actions we can all take to ensure our forests are healthy long into the future. A local advisory committee in each state includes counties and cities who will carry recommendations forward. This process sets up a model approach that can be replicated by any coastal community that wants to ensure healthy forests into the future.

Urban Forest Planning and Planting Campaigns: We are writing a guide to use data to plan for urban canopy. We've seen cities set higher canopy goals than space allows and also goals set without using data. Most cities lack tree data or goals. This project shows how and why to use tree data for decision making and how to enlist the public/private sectors in planting campaigns to reach those goals. GIC's **guide to community tree mapping and planning** will cover these topics along with ways to stay safe while planting or inventorying trees. Trees canopy is often lowest in minority and low income communities, making those residents more susceptible to heat stress and respiratory diseases.

Tree Assessment and Ecosystem Services: GIC helped Boynton Beach Florida map and assess its tree canopy and set a goal to increase canopy by 25%! GIC has done this work for 4 communities in Florida and has plans to work with many more over the next year, including our partnership with Community Greening, a grassroots tree planting and education group.



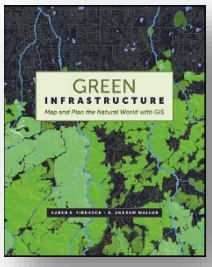
Canopy Coaching – Why pay someone to map your tree canopy when you might learn to do it yourself? Under a grant from the SCFC, GIC is teaching five communities in South Carolina how to map their own tree canopies and set goals. This builds capacity in local government to do more! We are also launching tree planning and planting campaigns in 3 cities: Greenville, Georgetown and Irmo, SC.

Tree Inventory Tools – A grant to teach states how to use tree inventory software with 5 free software licenses for each state. The GIC is partnering with Dovetail Partners and Forest Metrix to train people to do their own inventories. This project is targeted to smaller cities and towns who might not otherwise afford to do this work. Interested? Contact GIC to learn how your town can get this limited free software! GIC is also developing guidance on how to plan for storms and recovery as part of this project.

Toolkit for Forest Policies SC – The GIC is developing tools for local governments to include forests in comprehensive planning and policies. It also covers who has the best ordinances and plans! Why reinvent when you can emulate the best?

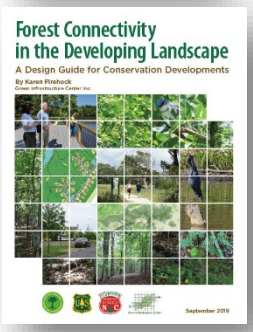
GIC Resources

Map and Plan the Natural World with GIS published in summer 2019 by Esri Press. The book covers the science behind habitat modeling and describes how to use Geographic Information Systems to determine priorities to conservation across landscapes. This technical book is intended for GIS analysts, providing techniques and tools to use the national habitat model (which GIC built for Esri in 2018) and how to create Green Infrastructure strategies for large landscapes. The book describes the science behind habitat mapping and how to use data for conservation and restoration! https://green-infrastructure.esri.com/AssetFinder/index.html



Design Guide for Forest Connectivity in the Developing Landscape

GIC designed two conservation subdivisions in the Carolinas in partnership with local land trusts to show how to conserve large areas of woodlands on lots slated for development. Both sites included affordable housing to allow for equality of access to natural areas regardless of income and conserve more than 50 percent of mature forest and water features. The guide provides arguments and steps for true conservation design and technical references for any planner, developer, elected official or citizen to adapt. Download free: http://www.gicinc.org/PDFs/DesignGuide_final.pdf



Trees to Offset Stormwater: A 12 City Study

GIC studies 12 cities and one county to determine the role of trees in mitigating stormwater runoff in VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, and AL. The GIC and the states obtained funding from the USFS Southern Region. The **12 case study booklets for each city are on GIC's website.** – get them on line at www.gicinc.org **Summary report** http://www.gicinc.org/trees_stormwater.htm

Want to learn more and support our work? Learn about our completed projects at http://www.gicinc.org Support our work -- all donations are 100% tax deductible and help communities. Donate at http://www.gicinc.org/donate.htm Contact: GIC, 320 Valley Street, Scottsville VA 24590 (434)286-3119 Check us out on Facebook too!