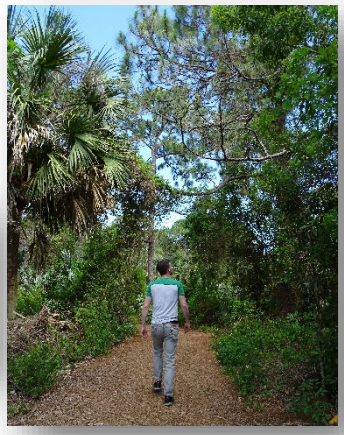
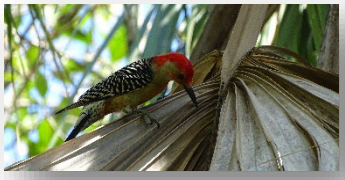
Executive Director's Summer 2021 Report

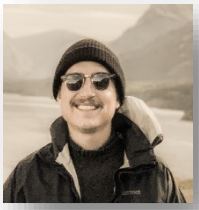
www.gicinc.org



We are almost halfway through 2021 and emerging from the Pandemic. Although the health crisis has clipped our wings this past year, our staff are fully vaccinated and now on the road across many states. In May we travelled to Florida to complete field work for a tree canopy assessment of Boca Raton FL. This makes our 5th Florida project, in addition to Boynton Beach, Miami Beach, Jacksonville, and Orange County. Unlike some computer modeling firms, we put boots on the ground to field check our data and to gather beautiful images for our reports. At far right, Matt Lee investigates a natural area and we find a red bellied woodpecker foraging in the palm canopy. It's a reminder that many species depend on us protecting their habitats – even in densely populated cities!



We continue to enjoy our new offices in Scottsville, VA along the James River. We have contributed ideas to town planning and hope to next assist the town with restoring some habitat along their river front park. Our two new landscape architects (featured below) will assist in the design.



In June 2021, we also welcomed *two new landscape design staff* (new positions!). **Zac Walrod** brings expertise in traditional forms of design communication, including hand sketching, drafting, model creation, rendering and photography in addition to his skills in multiple computer aided graphic design tools. Zac has a degree in landscape architecture, with honors, from Colorado State University and spent six years working in landscape architecture firms in the Denver metro area, ultimately developing a portfolio of work ranging from master-planned communities to detailed site designs. Zac is completing his final year of study for a Master of Landscape Architecture.

Our second hire, **Jessica Huang** is an environmental scientist pursuing her Master of Landscape Architecture degree at the University of Virginia's School of Architecture. She earned her degree in Environmental Studies from Dickinson College, where she researched sustainable community development. Past work has ranged from assessing community resiliency in Carlisle, PA, to conducting qualitative research on climate change and human security in Nepal. In 2019, she served as the Tree Equity Coordinator, developing the urban forest and stormwater capacity in Portland, Oregon. For complete bios see http://www.gicinc.org/staff.htm

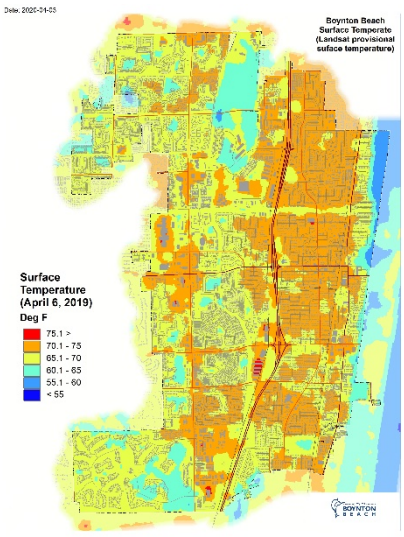
Current Projects

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 and developing management actions to avoid or mitigate those threats to healthy forests and communities. 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. 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. Each state region has a local advisory committee who will carry recommendations forward. This is a model process that can be replicated by any coastal community. Management planning will continue this summer with plans to be developed at the end of 2021.

Urban Forest Planning and Planting Campaigns:

We are writing a guide on decision making for urban forests, funded by the USFS Southern Region. The guide explains how plan for urban tree canopy and how to justify planting campaigns based on the many environmental benefits that trees provide. 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 will cover these topics along with marketing messages to bring more partners on board.



Social equity is also major element of the guide! Trees canopy is often lowest in minority and low income communities, making those residents more susceptible to heat stress and respiratory diseases. Using GIC's recent data from 14 communities across the south, we are demonstrating that minority communities are often hotter with far lower canopy cover than affluent areas. This has major health implications, especially for young children and seniors. Our first results led the City of Boynton Beach to expand their canopy goal by 30% and to commit to planting trees in and with low income minority communities first.

We launched tree planning and planting campaigns with three cities as demonstrations: Greenville, Georgetown and Irmo, SC. Key messages have been developed to appeal to a diversity of audiences and engage them in planting for the future (see example at left). Many trees have been planted and more are planned for this fall – stay tuned for final results!

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 created a course to teach 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 currently teaching the City and County of Charleston to do this work.

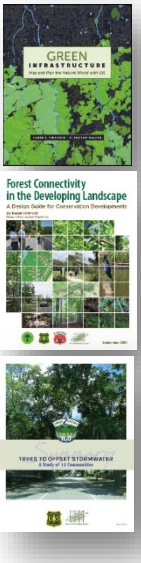
Tree Inventory and Storm Planning Tools

–The GIC is partnering with Dovetail Partners and Forest Metrix to train people to do their own tree inventories. This project is targeted to smaller cities and towns who might not otherwise afford to do this work. GIC is also developing guidance on how to plan for storms and recovery as part of this project. We are launching two test projects in Niceville and Marianna in the Florida Panhandle region – both cities were hard hit by hurricane Michael in 2018. Hurricanes will continue…but next time these communities will be better prepared for both cleanup and restoring their tree canopy This will inform updates to our forest storm planning guide adapted from GA and VA for use across the South.

Toolkit for Forest Policies SC

– The GIC has wrapped its work on the Forest Planners' Toolkit for South Carolina to be published in just a few weeks. It covers all the tree and forest policies and codes that a county, city or town should have. It will be posted to our website soon for free download. Although written for South Carolina, these codes apply everywhere!

GIC Resources



Map and Plan the Natural World with GIS 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. 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. 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

Learn more and support our work at http://www.gicinc.org 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!