

# NEVADA

## Nevada Division of Forestry

**In the small town of West Wendover, NV, a grassroots effort spearheaded by a high school student garnered enough statewide support to test new technology that could change plantings in the cold desert, particularly in areas where infrastructure is lacking. The Nevada Division of Forestry is proud to have helped this effort get off the ground. This first-of-its-kind public tree planting in West Wendover has sparked a regional discussion about the benefits of trees and engaged Nevadans of all ages and life stages to help grow the community tree canopy.**

As the driest state in the U.S., establishing a tree canopy in urban and populated areas of Nevada is no easy task. Recognizing the tremendous value and benefits that trees bring to our communities, more attention has been devoted to cultivating tree canopies in all corners of the state, particularly in historically underserved and marginalized communities. Unfortunately, tree canopy cover is often lacking in these communities, due to the exceptional effort required to establish and maintain a robust tree canopy in the arid environments.

Located on the Utah border, West Wendover, NV, is a town of just over 4,000 people, with a 65% minority-majority population and a median household income half that of the state as a whole. This Great Basin Desert community sees an average rainfall of only 4.5 inches annually, presenting challenging conditions for growing a tree canopy.

Local high school student Anthony Collazo discovered the many benefits that trees provide to his community, and made it his personal goal to establish more trees in the abundant open space and areas with the potential to become parks. Recognizing the challenges of establishing young trees in arid regions, he researched techniques and tools for establishing trees on sites before installing irrigation. He found a product on the market called the Groasis Waterboxx, a product rarely used in the United States, and advocated to give it a try in West Wendover.

With technical support and trees provided by the Nevada Division of Forestry State Tree Nursery and seedlings from the Arbor Day Foundation, coupled with Anthony's successful volunteer and fundraising efforts to purchase Waterboxxes, mentorship from teachers, and community support, nearly 300 trees were planted in West Wendover in spring 2020. First-year survival rates over 90% far exceed rates generally seen in similar harsh environments. The City has committed to installing irrigation to support the trees as they grow, and will develop usable open space for local families, residents, and visitors to enjoy in the years to come.

Additionally, the successful trials introduced a new tool for tree establishment in harsh environments that serve as a model for similar tree canopy initiatives throughout the state.



*(Above) High school student Anthony Collazo showing urban forester Andi Porreca the mechanics of how the Waterboxx harvests water for slow delivery facilitating seedling survival in the arid environment. Photo: Cayenne Engel*



*(Left) Anthony Collazo led the recent tree planting effort in West Wendover. Photo: Gary Reese*

*(Right) Seedling planted in experimental Waterboxx facilitating seedling survival in arid environments. Photo: Andi Porreca*