

WYOMING

Wyoming State Forestry Division

Each year, Wyoming State Forestry Division's (WSFD) Community Forestry program offers the Community Forestry Partnership Cost-Share Grants program for tree planting and/or program development. This year, eleven tree planting grants were awarded. In spite of the world-wide novel coronavirus (COVID-19), many of these tree planting projects were successfully completed, offering Wyoming communities the health benefits of trees in their communities and beyond.

A healthy forest is dependent on the diversity of the canopy; diversity in the form of species richness, size class, and age. Many of Wyoming's community forests consist primarily of over-mature cottonwoods, spruce, and ash trees. More now than ever, planting trees offers a wealth of health all around.

During a Wyoming Community Tree Managers Focus Group meeting, attendees were polled and results showed that most municipal forestry employees were deemed essential and therefore remained employed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. WSFD's Community Forestry Partnership Cost-Share Grants awarded funds for tree planting projects to 11 communities and tree planting non-profits. Despite restrictions, budget cuts, and staff reductions, at least two of these tree planting projects will not

be completed this year but will have the opportunity to apply for funding again in the future. Most of the tree planting projects have been or will be successfully completed by the end of the summer 2020, with over 600 new trees in the ground. Planting that many trees takes time and effort.

Utilizing volunteers is an important component of WSFD tree planting grant projects. While some projects were delayed indefinitely due to the pandemic, others were able to adapt to allow for safety and social distancing. Through volunteerism, participants gain health benefits by participating, investing time and effort in community and civic enhancement, connecting with nature, building social relationships, and engaging in physical activity. All of these elements build a community

foundation, sense of accomplishment, empowerment, and stimulate mental and physical health and wellness.

Through the power house of volunteer work, the continued support and capacity building of tree planting programs and non-profits, and promotion of tree diversity and species richness, WSFD continues the upward trend of increasing healthy, resilient, sustainable, urban and community forest canopy cover in Wyoming, and offering a wealth of health for the whole world.

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1. Buffalo's Clear Creek Middle School 8th grade class selected 12 trees that will do well in their school's climate and soil conditions. The school's Beautification Team and Clear Creek Conservation District was awarded a WSFD Community Forestry Partnership Cost-share tree planting grant to purchase trees for this project. Photo Credit: Jen Skaggs. **2.** City of Green River tree planting project funded in part by a Community Forestry Partnership Cost-Share Grant. Photo Credit: Steve Core. **3.** Local Scout Troop 26 volunteering for City of Powell's Homesteader Roots spring tree planting event. Photo Credit: Mark Davis.

