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## **Shapiro Administration Highlights Grants to Plant Trees in Overlooked and Underserved Communities**

**Reading, PA** – Today, **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn** visited Reading to highlight grants available to plant trees in underserved cities and towns across the Commonwealth.

The grants add to a budget commitment to maintain and improve Pennsylvania's natural places. Governor Shapiro's 2024-25 budget proposal includes another strong investment in the stewardship of Pennsylvania's natural resources, with new funding to build trails and expand the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps program.

"Planting trees helps the planet—and helps people. Trees keep neighborhoods cool during heat waves, prevent flooding during storms, and clean the air that kids breathe," **Secretary Dunn** said during a visit to Schlegel Park. "These grants, funded with federal dollars, will deliver benefits to communities that have been overlooked and underserved, since they don't require a match."

The urban and community forestry grants will award up to \$4 million for projects as a part of this year's [Community Conservation Partnerships Program](#).

Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, Pennsylvania is receiving \$9.75 million from the U.S. Forest Service to support communities with equitable access to trees and the benefits they provide.

"We are proud to support DCNR and its mission of planting trees here in the city," **Reading Mayor Eddie Morán** said. "Trees are a vital part of Reading streets, parks, and landscapes. A heartfelt thank you to DCNR for championing community health and wellness with us!"

DCNR staff are available to assist with answering questions, visiting potential project sites, and developing competitive grant applications. To get started, [contact the department's urban and community forestry experts](#) at 717-787-2703.

"This direct support for the conservation efforts of local governments and nonprofit groups is needed and welcome in Berks County and throughout the Commonwealth," state **Senator Judy Schwank** said. "By planting trees and creating green spaces, we not only enhance the beauty of our surroundings but also improve air quality, provide recreational opportunities and support biodiversity. The trees celebrated today help create a brighter, more sustainable future for all residents of Berks County and beyond!"

“We are excited to be here today to celebrate trees and to highlight grant opportunities that can help communities like ours,” state **Representative Manuel Guzman** said. “Expanding access to green spaces is more important than ever. Trees are essential to improve the quality of life. What we create and protect now will be crucial for the wellbeing of generations to come. Thank you to DCNR and Governor Josh Shapiro for supporting eco-healthy initiatives in Reading.”

DCNR grants have supported projects in Reading and Berks County including:

- \$25,000 for Schlegel Park for a pool feasibility study
- \$250,000 to the city for the Third and Spruce Recreation Center for accessible play equipment, safe surfacing, and lighting

Grant applications must be submitted by 4:00 PM April 3 through [DCNR's Grants Customer Service Portal](#).

In 2021, DCNR added its first Tree Equity Specialist to apply the principles of equity and environmental justice in urban and community forestry work across the commonwealth.

If underserved communities aren't able to apply for grants, either due to lack of capacity or for not meeting the minimum \$50,000 project size, the department is prepared to work with them to implement community forestry projects.

Trees and forests are critical in our efforts to address climate change, as they pull in and store carbon (a process that also helps with clean air). Other benefits are:

- Reducing energy costs;
- Slowing runoff after storms;
- Increasing property values;
- Mental and physical health benefits;
- Reducing noise; and
- Attracting birds and wildlife.

The Shapiro Administration has ambitious goals around trees and forests, including: reducing current rates of forest loss by 5,000 acres per year, restoring 5,000 acres of non-forest to forest by planting trees, and permanently conserving 15,000 acres of forest land vulnerable to development.

Dunn noted that interested Pennsylvanians can help support efforts to plant urban trees by donating to the Keystone Tree Fund voluntary \$3 check-off box on driver's license and vehicle registration online applications.

Find more information about [trees in communities](#) on the DCNR website.

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