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Tree inventory finds 34% increase in the number of trees in DC

Invasive species displacing native trees, threaten area's ecosystem

(Washington, DC – 11 March 2010) – Analysis of Casey Trees' i-Tree Eco Inventory shows a 34% increase in the number of trees and significant spike in the number of invasive trees species in the District over the last five years.

Last summer, Casey Trees spearheaded the second i-Tree Eco Inventory for the District. Teams of Casey Trees and National Park Service (NPS) staff and volunteers counted, measured, and identified trees and shrubs at 201 one-tenth-acre plots across the City. The plots include private (161) and NPS-owned (40) parcels and are the same plots originally visited in 2004, the first year a UFORE inventory was performed for the District. Casey Trees has committed to conducting an i-Tree Eco inventory every five years using the same parcels to chart change.

Key findings from the 2009 i-Tree Eco Inventory include:

- The District has approximately 2.6 million trees, an increase of 700,000 trees or 34 percent since 2004. Trees with diameters of less than 6 inches make up 62.6% of the City's tree population.
- The three most common tree species in the District are American beech (11.8%), Callery pear (6%) and Tulip tree (4.8%).
- Exotic invasive tree species have increased significantly. For the first time, two invasive species, the Callery pear and the Tree-of-Heaven (2.8%) have become two of most common tree species in the District, second and eighth respectively. These species displace native species, cause property and infrastructure damage and contribute little ecologically in proportion to the amount of space they occupy.
- The number of Special Trees (55" or greater in circumference) has increased 16% over the period but the proportion of these trees to the total population decreased from 13.4% to 11.6%. No trees were found in the 54-57 diameter class (DBH), the highest DBH class recorded in 2004.
- Four exotic pests, the Asian longhorned beetle, gypsy moth, emerald ash borer and Dutch elm disease, pose a serious threat to the City's urban forest and a potential loss of billions in structural value.
- Carbon gross sequestration in metric tons per year increased 17.6%.

The i-Tree Eco Model is an analysis tool developed by the US Forest Service Northern Research Station. Results are used to improve and augment support for urban forest management programs and to integrate urban forests within plans to improve environmental quality in the Washington DC area. i-Tree Eco uses a ground-based statistical sample to say things about trees throughout a geographic area.

Complete 2009 and 2004 i-Tree Eco reports can be found at www.caseytrees.org.

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About Casey Trees:
Casey Trees is a Washington, DC-based not-for-profit, established in 2001, dedicated to restoring, enhancing and protecting the tree canopy of the Nation's Capital.