



**City of Spokane
Citizen Advisory Committee to the
Urban Forestry Tree Committee**

3 p.m. Tuesday, March 31, 2026
Hybrid in-person and WebEx virtual meeting
Katie Sorensen - Urban Forester

Committee Members:

- X Tim Kohlhauff
- X Guy Gifford
- X Cindy Deffe
- X Matt Stewart
- Justyce Brant – (Absent – Excused)
- X Ben Kappen
- Logan Callen – (Absent – Excused)
- Kathryn Alexander – (Absent – Excused)
- X Kelsi Caston
- X Eduardo Castillo

Parks Staff:

Katie Sorensen
Steve Nittolo

Guests:

Chris “Copp” Coppen – Friends of Spokane
Trees

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m. by committee chair Kris Neely who opened the meeting with introductions.

Public Comments:

Chris “Copp” Coppen from Friends of Spokane Trees shared that Friends of Spokane Trees was established approximately six to eight months ago in response to concerns on how to balance urban development and clearing land for increased housing and preserving trees in the city core and heritage trees. The group is working on a city ordinance that would help govern and determine what kinds of trees could be cut down and what leeways must be left on properties when a developer wants to clear a lot. He advised city council members Kate Tellis and Paul Dillion are supporting them in writing the ordinance. The purpose is to look at how more trees can be preserved in the city. He advised the group is trying to dissuade clear cutting of lots to preserve some trees while also respecting the right of developers to clear land they need for housing and that they are not trying to stop development just preserve some trees in the development process.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes from **March 2026** were approved. Motion to approve the March 2026 minutes by Guy Gifford, seconded by Tim Kohlhauff, approved unanimously.

Discussion Items:

1. Ceremonies, Appointments, Announcements

- Katie welcomed new committee members Kelsi Caston and Eduardo Castillo who were appointed to the committee at the March 3rd meeting.

Standing Report Items:

1. Community Assembly – No Report.

2. Staff Report – Katie Sorensen

- a. There has been a significant amount of beetle killed trees and removals have been completed at Manito, Lincoln, and Coeur d' Alene Parks, Whitewater Disc Golf Course, Golf Courses, and overall, within the park system. Urban Forestry has been consulting with Dana Brennan an entomologist with the Department of Natural Resources to make sure UF is doing all they can do. UF continues to be proactive and has been able to identify trees that have beetles overwintering in them and remove the trees before the beetles emerge.
- b. The recent windstorm resulted in about a dozen tree failures in the parks and all work has been completed.
- c. Approximately a dozen bald cypress trees will be planted next week at Sky Prairie Park with a juvenile group that UF typically plants with every year. A highlight of their experience with the Parks Department has been planting trees with the UF crew. They have also done work in Riverfront Park and Manito Park and get to see what a parks career looks like.
- d. Urban Forestry is working with Spokane Ponderosa to plant hundreds of seedlings on various sites where trees have been lost, including Hamblen Park, Manito Park, and various natural right-of-way area, such as along Downriver Dr. Planting also continues at Champion Park.
- e. Urban Forestry Specialist Becky Phillips is retiring. Her last day with the city will be April 10th. Becky handled inspections, permitting, and other items including other Development Service items. Staff are incredibly thankful for the public service she provided for many years. Urban Forestry will be moving forward with the hiring process for this position, which is partially funded by Development Services.
- f. Code Enforcement is taking over sending notices for clearance issues over sidewalks and roadways. Urban Forestry previously sent notices for clearance issues in the right-of-way and took an educational approach. The vegetation code falls under Code Enforcement so they will be sending the notices and enforcing compliance.
- g. Urban Forestry is working on a hiring list for the Arborist position, which is currently filled. Civil Service generally has a list of applicants for positions and if there is a vacancy the list of applicants is accessed. There currently is not a list for the Arborist position and UF is working with Civil Service to update it for if there ever was a need to fill the Arborist position.

- h. Urban Forestry is working with the Daughters of the American Revolution for a planting of Cherry trees at Riverfront Park. One tree will be planted for Arbor Day possibly, with the rest being planted in a larger 'Never Forget Garden' project in the fall. The plantings are in the planning phase and Parks Planning is working on the design.
- i. Urban Forestry is providing assistance with tree work for the development of the Meadow Glenn Park, which is in the Indian Trail area. UF will mainly be helping with fuels reduction which will reduce tree work costs of the overall project.
- j. A deciduous shrub planting day on the bluff took place Saturday March 21st with Nick Jeffries, Friends of the Bluff, and other volunteer groups.
- k. A Susie Forest tree will be dedicated at the library on April 19th and planted the following Monday.
- l. There have been many damage claims recently, where people run their cars off the road and hit trees. Urban Forestry invoices for damages and the insurance usually pays the damages and UF can remove and replace the trees. If there is a decrease in value of a tree UF can invoice for those trees in anticipating the shortened life span of the tree. Staff are working to catch up on all possible claims.

Old Business:

1. IRA Grant Update – Katie Sorensen

- a. Starting the week of April 6th approximately two hundred trees will be planted within areas covered by the grant. Amber Ramirez is establishing tree planting lists to distribute to the planting contractors and is coordinating utility locates. The homeowner coordination is being done by The Lands Council. A volunteer planting will take place the week of May 5th and more details will be out soon.
- b. The Downtown Spokane Partnership Contract was finalized with the launch of the tree program for downtown. There is a free tree program to prompt replacement trees downtown. DSP will water trees downtown on an emergency basis and alert property owners/tenants of issues. A proactive educational approach and participation of abutting property owners will help prevent costly removals and replacements for property owners.
- c. Urban Forestry is receiving 1,350 seedlings from the Spokane Conservation District for UF programs. Seedlings will be distributed to OnTrack Academy for their Tree Hero Event, senior centers, youth centers, all libraries, at the Shadle library plant swap and at the City's Arbor Day event.
- d. Dead tree removals through the grant are almost finished with one contractor still having some removals to complete.
- e. Urban Forestry will have a table at the Spokane Conservation District's Arbor Day Celebration.

- f. Large signs were made for the Tree Equity Spokane Program with information on the free tree program and sign-ups. The signs will be placed at numerous locations and UF is looking for additional ideas of locations to place signs.
- g. Urban Forestry participated in a Water Wise presentation on trees this week. The meeting was coordinated by SpokaneScape and 87 people attended. UF provided information on the Tree Equity Program, opportunities for planting, and information on properly watering trees.
- h. A beetle workshop was held Saturday March 28th at the Finch Arboretum with Dana Brennan an entomologist with the Department of Natural Resources. Twenty people attended.

It was asked if there had been an update on the state funding for the Community Forestry Program that had been at jeopardy of being cut. Katie advised she had been informed the state Community Forestry Program funding has been reinstated.

2. **Arbor Day** – Katie Sorensen

The Arbor Day Celebration is Saturday April 25th at Finch Arboretum. It is a well-attended event and will be held rain or shine. There will be a compost fair, free seedlings, a climbing demonstration, free coffee/hot cocoa and kettle corn, a Tree City USA ceremony, a ribbon cutting for the Touch and See nature trail, and much more. UF is looking for more volunteers if committee members are interested in volunteering at the event.

Urban Forestry will have a booth for Arbor Day at My Fresh Basket and will give out seedlings the week after Arbor Day.

Tree Hero Event at OnTrack Academy on April 18th. This will be the 5th year they have held this event. The students tree projects will be on display, and they will be giving out tree seedlings. They help with tree plantings finding locations for trees to be planted, especially in the northeast neighborhoods. The school also has Tree City USA K-12 Campus accreditation through the Arbor Day Foundation.

- 3. **Heritage Tree Nomination Review** - Review of the Heritage Tree Nomination was moved to next month. The committee would like to review program information more thoroughly as it has been some time since the last nomination was received.

New Business:

1. **Urban Forestry Golf Update** – Steve Nittolo

Steve works one day a week for golf and 20% of his salary is paid by the Golf Enterprise Fund. Urban Forestry has a partnership with golf and UF provides them with assistance with tree maintenance, pine beetle killed tree removals, pest monitoring, and tree plantings. UF staff also assists with pruning, provides training to golf staff to perform minor pruning for clearance, and creates and updates tree management plans. Golf has also contracted some tree work to implement plans.

Tree management plans have been created for all city golf courses. The plans address issues with play on the course, safety, turf health and tree health. Approximately 120 mature trees, not including beetle killed trees, were worked on in 2025 by Urban Forestry staff. Work included pruning and removal for turf health, playability and safety.

In 2025 a more aggressive approach has been taken to manage beetle infestations. This included UF and golf working with a WSDNR Entomologist to acquire improved ability to identify beetle stressed trees and general knowledge of beetles. UF has been better able to predict what trees have beetles and remove them before the beetles emerge.

Downriver Golf Course had several trees pruned to raise canopy, replacements trees (mostly Western larch) were planted to replace beetle killed trees, Pine trees were monitored and beetle killed or infested trees removed, UF removed and replaced flowering pear trees at the clubhouse and UF purchased 200 – 2-year-old Western larch seedlings to grow for future plantings at Downriver.

It was asked how UF knows there are beetles still in the trees. UF and an entomologist assessed some trees at Manito Park. Some bark was removed, and beetles were found to be overwintering in the trees. Generally, once the trees have turned brown the beetles have emerged, and you don't find any other beetles. If there is any sort of moisture the beetles can still be in the trees.

Indian Canyon Golf Course had Pine trees monitored, and beetle killed or infested trees were removed, approximately 50 trees were pruned or removed for turf health or other reasons, UF assisted with clearance pruning along course property on W. West Dr., and the Fire Department contracted crews thinned areas designated on tree management plans.

Creek at Qualchan had maintenance of seedlings along Highway 195, canopies of trees raised for turf health, fuels reduction work done on slope above the course, UF staff removed several dead pine trees, and 85 pine trees were planted on the course.

Esmeralda Golf Course had canopy raised on many trees for turf health and playability, several large trees removed, fuels reduction work by the Fire Department, and the UF staff watered, weeded, replaced missing trees and Ponderosa pine seedlings were planted.

It was asked what the total inventory of trees is at Downriver golf course. Steve advised the trees are not inventoried and that it would be difficult due to the number of small trees. Some areas on the golf courses are partially inventoried which took place when UF assessed trees that had to do with projects happening on the courses and the trees were designated to be protected during the projects.

Other Program and Partnership Ideas: None

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is 3 p.m. May 5, 2026.

Golf Course Tree Management Update

March 25, 2026



Update Overview

- ▶ Urban Forestry/Golf Partnership
- ▶ Areas of Urban Forestry (UF) assistance
 - ▶ Tree Maintenance
 - ▶ Pine beetle losses/removals
 - ▶ Pest Monitoring and Management
 - ▶ Tree Plantings



Urban Forestry/Golf Partnership

- ▶ UF staff assists with some pruning and removals
- ▶ UF staff works to provide training to perform minor pruning for Golf staff that are interested
- ▶ Golf has also contracted some tree work to implement plans. Contractors must obtain a permit for work on trees that are on City of Spokane property.
- ▶ UF staff creates and updates tree management plans



Urban Forestry/Golf Partnership

- ▶ Tree management plans for all city golf courses have been created, are being used for determining tasks, and are updated as tasks are completed
- ▶ Plans include identifying locations for plantings, trees for removal, and trees in need of pruning.
- ▶ Plans address issues with Play on the Course, Safety, Turf Health, and Tree Health.

Tree Maintenance

- ▶ Approximately 120 mature trees (not counting beetle killed trees) worked on in 2025 by Urban Forestry staff; consisting of mostly pruning and removals for reasons of turf health, playability, and safety.
- ▶ Trees removed due to bark beetle death or infestations
- ▶ Watering, pruning, and protecting replacement trees from herbivory - replacement trees range from seedlings to 2” caliper





Pine bark beetle damage

In 2025 UF started taking a more aggressive approach to managing beetle infestations

Working with WSDNR Entomologist Golf and UF staff acquired improved abilities in identifying beetle stressed trees, signs of beetles, and general knowledge of life cycles of the several types of beetles attacking pines

We've been able to better predict which trees are likely to be hosts to the next generation of beetles and remove them before the beetles fly

Still sometimes a difficult decision making process

Course Updates

▶ Downriver Golf Course

- ▶ Pruning of several trees to raise canopies
- ▶ Plantings of replacements, of mostly western larch, for beetle killed trees. Since 2023, 164 trees have been planted on course. Of the 164, 65 were planted in 2025.
- ▶ Tree monitoring and removals beetle killed or infested pines 112 total approx. 76 of those larger than 6" diameter - many older large diameter trees
- ▶ UF staff removed and replaced flowering pears at clubhouse
- ▶ UF purchasing 200 - 2 year old western larch seedlings (2-3') this spring to grow for future planting at Downriver.

TreeWorks Map

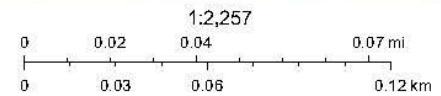


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TreeWorks_Data

- removal site
- stump
- tree

Sheet 6



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Downriver Clubhouse tree replacements

Course Updates

▶ Indian Canyon

- ▶ Tree monitoring and removals of beetle killed or infested 101 pines, many older large trees
- ▶ Approximately 50 trees pruned or removed for turf health or other reasons
- ▶ Urban Forestry assisted with clearance pruning along course property along W. West Dr.
- ▶ Fire Department contracted crews thinned areas designated on tree management plans and some others

17 tee, 16 green, 14 green, 15 tee, 11 tee

TreeWorks Map

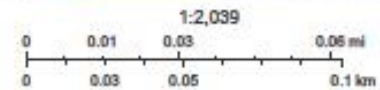


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TreeWorks_Data

- planting site
- removal site
- stump
- tree

Sheet 3



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TreeWorks User

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Course Updates

▶ Creek at Qualchan

- ▶ Maintenance of seedlings along Highway 195- watering, weeding, mulching, replacing, and applying herbivore repellents performed by UF staff
- ▶ Canopies of trees raised for turf health
- ▶ Fuels reduction work on slope above course continues by Spokane Fire Department contracted crews with UF staff consulting
- ▶ UF staff removed several dead pine trees
- ▶ 85 4-5', 5-6', and 6-7' pines planted on course



Qualchan 4 tee, 4 green, 5tee, 5 green, 6 green, 7 green, 3 green, 8 tee



Qualchan seedlings along 195



Pine plantings at Qualchan



Update for Courses

► Esmeralda

- Many of the golf course trees worked on by UF are at Esmeralda and had canopies raised for turf health and playability
- Several large trees were removed with approval from UF and as per tree management plan
- Fuels Reduction work by Fire Dept. contracted on surrounding areas with UF consultation
- UF staff watered, weeded, and replaced missing Rocky Mountain juniper, lodgepole pine, and ponderosa pine seedling plantings

Plantings Esmeralda





Esmeralda
5 ponderosa
pine planted
on course

Esmeralda north potential plantings



Golf Course Tree Management Update

► Questions?

