



CREATING A TREE PLANTING CONSORTIUM IN LAKE COUNTY, IN TO IMPROVE WATER, CANOPY, AND EQUITY

Delta Institute is working with municipal, business, and community partners in Lake County, Indiana to expand regional forest canopy acreage via an innovative multi-community approach to comprehensive canopy mapping; forest planning, installing 2,240+ trees, and expanding maintenance and capacity building. These efforts will be achieved via a collaborative tree planting consortium structure with foundational inclusive community engagement throughout the entire process.

Why our work is needed today

As climate change impacts cities and regions throughout the Midwest, increased problems related to flooding, stormwater runoff, and degraded infrastructure all threaten public health, water quality, economic opportunity, and quality of life. These problems are most acute in areas with historical divestment and exclusion.

We believe these challenges can be addressed by planting trees in the region to mitigate stormwater challenges, as well as providing capacity-building training sessions for the local community to promote long-term forestry stewardship and management. Along with other investment, Green Infrastructure (GI) can help communities manage their stormwater runoff, improve air and water quality, increase property values, and build social cohesion.

Brief Overview of What We're Doing

Delta Institute (Delta) and our coalition of partners (public, private, community, and nonprofit) are organizing and implementing a regional Tree Planting Consortium (TPC) in Lake County, Indiana, to administer trainings, oversee planting planning and data collection activities, identify vendors, administer procurement, share education materials, oversee coordination, and support the execution of best management practices (BMP) for stormwater tree planting, maintenance, and stewardship. These efforts will address water quality, urban forest canopy, and environmental justice issues in our partner municipalities:

Maintain/improve water quality and watershed function: Demonstration projects will serve as both a “boots-on-the-ground”

example for TPC candidates to witness diverse forestry and restoration project options while providing measurable environmental benefit related to the 2020 Indiana State Forest Action Plan, GLRI Action Plan, and several local watershed/regional plans. **7M stormwater gallons treated annually via 2,240 trees planted**; water quality indicators (phosphorus, nitrogen, sediment, E.coli) will be monitored using EPA guidelines and BMP tools.

Ecological and economic benefits: The TPC's regional management will maximize tree canopy restoration and stormwater management while advancing equity, neighborhood/corridor beautification, public health, carbon capture and sequestration, habitat restoration, species diversification, emerald ash borer mitigation, local volunteerism, youth education, and community capacity-building via **41,600 acres of urban canopy expansion**. Sites are publicly accessible and offer expanded access to nature while addressing quality-of life needs.

Our scope of work directly aligns with identified issues local-, watershed- and regional plans. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan and 2020 Indiana State Forest Action Plan calls for restoring forests in riparian areas and asserts a forested buffer around perennial watercourses improves water quality, wildlife

habitat and protects soil resources by buffering runoff and improving infiltration/water quality. The local watershed management plan addresses water quality, habitat, and flood reduction in the HUC-10 Watershed, which drains into the Great Lakes.

Our partners and collaborators

This project is generously supported by a grant provided by the United States Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration program, and the Dr. Scholl Foundation.

More about who we are

This project is part of Delta's Nature-Based Climate Solutions initiative, which assists municipalities by integrating natural climate solutions and GI to reduce climate change impacts by capturing **100 million stormwater gallons** and leveraging **\$100 million in municipal GI investment**.

We work every day to create a more resilient region for all our Midwestern family, friends, and neighbors.

Learn more at:

delta-institute.org/project/nwi-tpc/



Delta Institute collaborates with communities to solve complex environmental challenges throughout the Midwest.

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Delta Institute is a 501c3 nonprofit with a 2023 Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar and a Four-Star Rating from Charity Navigator for our strong financial health and accountability.